



THE HOUSE OF  
THE COMBRAYS  
~BY G·LE NOTRE~



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# The House of the Combrays

By G. LE NOTRE

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Translated from the French by

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# PREFACE

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## AN OLD TOWER

ONE evening in the winter of 1868 or 1869, my father-in-law, Moisson, with whom I was chatting after dinner, took up a book that was lying on the table, open at the page where I had stopped reading, and said :

“ Ah ! you are reading *Mme. de la Chanterie* ? ”

“ Yes,” I replied. “ A fine book ; do you know it ? ”

“ Of course ! I even know the heroine.”

“ *Mme. de la Chanterie* ! ”

“ — By her real name *Mme. de Combray*. I lived three months in her house.”

“ *Rue Chanoinesse* ? ”

“ No, not in the *Rue Chanoinesse*, where she did not live, any more than she was the saintly woman of Balzac’s novel ;—but at her *Château of Tournebut d’Aubevoye* near *Gaillon* ! ”

“ Gracious, Moisson, tell me about it ; ” and without further solicitation, Moisson told me the following story :

“ My mother was a *Brécourt*, whose ancestor was

a bastard of Gaston d'Orleans, and she was on this account a royalist, and very proud of her nobility. The Brécourts, who were fighting people, had never become rich, and the Revolution ruined them completely. During the Terror my mother married Moisson, my father, a painter and engraver, a plebeian but also an ardent royalist, participating in all the plots for the deliverance of the royal family. This explains the *mésalliance*. She hoped, besides, that the monarchy, of whose reestablishment she had no doubt, would recognise my father's services by ennobling him and reviving the name of Brécourt, which was now represented only in the female line. She always called herself Moisson de Brécourt, and bore me a grudge for using only my father's name.

"In 1804, when I was eight years old, we were living on the island of Saint-Louis, and I remember very well the excitement in the quarter, and above all in our house, caused by the arrest of Georges Cadoudal. I can see my mother anxiously sending our faithful servant for news; my father came home less and less often; and at last, one night, he woke me up suddenly, kissed me, kissed my mother hastily, and I can still hear the noise of the street door closing behind him. We never saw him again!"

"Arrested?"

"No, we should have known that, but probably killed in flight, or dead of fatigue and want, or drowned in crossing some river—like many other fugitives, whose names I used to know. He was to have sent us news as soon as he was in safety. After a month's



waiting, my mother's despair became alarming. She seemed mad, committed the most compromising acts, spoke aloud and with so little reserve about Bonaparte, that each time the bell rang, our servant and I expected to see the police.

"A very different kind of visitor appeared one fine morning. He was, he said, the business man of Mme. de Combray, a worthy woman who lived in her Château of Tournebut d'Aubevoye near Gaillon. She was a fervent royalist, and had heard through common friends of my father's disappearance, and compassionating our misfortune placed a house near her own at the disposal of my mother, who would there find the safety and peace that she needed, after her cruel sorrows. As my mother hesitated, Mme. de Combray's messenger urged the benefit to my health, the exercise and the good air indispensable at my age, and finally she consented. Having obtained all necessary information, my mother, the servant and I took the boat two days after, at Saint-Germain, and arrived by sunset the same evening at Roule, near Aubevoye. A gardener was waiting with a cart for us and our luggage. A few moments later we entered the court of the château.

"Mme. de Combray received us in a large room overlooking the Seine. She had one of her sons with her, and two intimate friends, who welcomed my mother with the consideration due to the widow of one who had served the good cause. Supper was served; I was drooping with sleep, and the only remembrance I have of this meal is the voice of my

mother, passionate and excitable as ever. Next morning, after breakfast, the gardener appeared with his cart, to take us to the house we were to occupy ; the road was so steep and rough that my mother preferred to go on foot, leading her horse by the bridle. We were in a thick wood, climbing all the time, and surprised at having to go so far and so high to reach the habitation that had been offered to us near the château. We came to a clearing in the wood, and the gardener cried, ' Here we are ! ' and pointed to our dwelling. ' Oh ! ' cried my mother, ' it is a donjon ! ' It was an old round tower, surmounted by a platform and with no opening but the door and some loop-holes that served as windows.

" The situation itself was not displeasing. A plateau cleared in the woods, surrounded by large trees with a vista towards the Seine, and a fine view extending some distance. The gardener had a little hut near by, and there was a small kitchen-garden for our use. In fact one would have been easily satisfied with this solitude, after the misfortunes of the Isle Saint-Louis, if the tower had been less forbidding. To enter it one had to cross a little moat, over which were thrown two planks, which served as a bridge. By means of a cord and pulley this could be drawn up from the inside, against the entrance door, thus making it doubly secure. ' And this is the drawbridge ! ' said my mother, mockingly.

" The ground floor consisted of a circular chamber, with a table, chairs, a sideboard, etc. Opposite the door, in an embrasure of the wall, about two yards in

thickness, a barred window lighted this room, which was to serve as sitting-room, kitchen and dining-room at the same time; but lighted it so imperfectly that to see plainly even in the daytime one had to leave the door open. On one side was the fireplace, and on the other the wooden staircase that led to the upper floors; under the staircase was a trap-door firmly closed by a large lock.

“‘It is the cellar,’ said the gardener, ‘but it is dangerous, as it is full of rubbish. I have a place where you can keep your drink.’ ‘And our food?’ said the servant.

“The gardener explained that he often went down to the château in his cart and that the cook would have every facility for doing her marketing at Aubevoye. As for my mother, Mme. de Combray, thinking that the journey up and down hill would be too much for her, would send a donkey which would do for her to ride when we went to the château in the afternoon or evening. On the first floor were two rooms separated by a partition; one for my mother and me, the other for the servant, both lighted only by loop-holes. It was cold and sinister.

“‘This is a prison!’ cried my mother.

“The gardener remarked that we should only sleep there; and seeing my mother about to go up to the next floor, he stopped her, indicating the dilapidated condition of the stairs. ‘This floor is abandoned,’ he said; ‘the platform above is in a very bad state, and the staircase impracticable and dangerous. Mme. de Combray begs that you will never go above the

first landing, for fear of an accident.' After which he went to get our luggage.

"My mother then gave way to her feelings. It was a mockery to lodge us in this rat-hole. She talked of going straight back to Paris; but our servant was so happy at having no longer to fear the police; I had found so much pleasure gathering flowers in the wood and running after butterflies; my mother herself enjoyed the great calm and silence so much that the decision was put off till the next day. And the next day we renounced all idea of going.

"Our life for the next two months was untroubled. We were at the longest days of the year. Once a week we were invited to supper at the château, and we came home through the woods at night in perfect security. Sometimes in the afternoon my mother went to visit Mme. de Combray, and always found her playing at cards or tric-trac with friends staying at the château or passing through, but oftenest with a stout man, her lawyer. No existence could be more commonplace or peaceful. Although they talked politics freely (but with more restraint than my mother), she told me later that she never for one moment suspected that she was in a nest of conspirators. Once or twice only Mme. de Combray, touched by the sincerity and ardour of her loyalty, seemed to be on the point of confiding in her. She even forgot herself so far as to say:—'Oh! if you were not so hot-headed, one would tell you certain things!'—but as if already regretting that she had said so much, she stopped abruptly.

“One night, when my mother could not sleep, her attention was attracted by a dull noise down-stairs, as if some one were shutting a trap-door clumsily. She lay awake all night uneasily, listening, but in vain. Next morning we found the room down-stairs in its usual condition; but my mother would not admit that she had been dreaming, and the same day spoke to Mme. de Combray, who joked her about it, and sent her to the gardener. The latter said he had made the noise. Passing the tower he had imagined that the door was not firmly closed, and had pushed against it to make sure. The incident did not occur again; but several days later there was a new, and this time more serious, alarm.

“I had noticed on top of the tower a blackbird’s nest, which could easily be reached from the platform, but, faithful to orders, I had never gone up there. This time, however, the temptation was too strong. I watched until my mother and the servant were in our little garden, and then climbed nimbly up to take the nest. On the landing of the second floor, curious to get a peep at the uninhabited rooms, I pushed open the door, and saw distinctly behind the glass door in the partition that separated the two rooms, a green curtain drawn quickly. In a great fright I rushed down-stairs head over heels, and ran into the garden, calling my mother and shouting, ‘There is some one up-stairs in the room!’ She did not believe it and scolded me. As I insisted she followed me up-stairs with the servant. From the landing my mother cried, ‘Is any one there?’ Silence.



She pushed open the glass door. No one to be seen —only a folding-bed, unmade. She touched it; it was warm! Some one had been there, asleep,—dressed, no doubt. Where was he? On the platform? We went up. No one was there! He had no doubt escaped when I ran to the garden!

“We went down again quickly and our servant called the gardener. He had disappeared. We saddled the donkey, and my mother went hurry-scurry to the château. She found the lawyer at the eternal tric-trac with Mme. de Combray, who frowned at the first word, not even interrupting her game.

“‘More dreams! The room is unoccupied! No one sleeps there!’

“‘But the curtain!’

“‘Well, what of the curtain? Your child made a draught by opening the door, and the curtain swung.’

“‘But the bed, still warm!’

“‘The gardener has some cats that must have been lying there, and ran away when the door was opened, and that’s all about it!’

“‘And yet ——’

“‘Well, have you found this ghost?’

“‘No.’

“‘Well then?’ And she shook her dice rather roughly without paying any more attention to my mother, who after exchanging a curt good-night with the Marquise, returned to the tower, so little convinced of the presence of the cats that she took two screw-rings from one of our boxes, fixed them on to



the trap-door, closed them with a padlock, took the key and said, 'Now we will see if any one comes in that way.' And for greater security she decided to lift the drawbridge after supper. We all three took hold of the rope that moved with difficulty on the rusty pulley. It was hard; we made three attempts. At last it moved, the bridge shook, lifted, came right up. It was done! And that evening, beside my bed, my mother said:

“‘We will not grow old in her Bastille!’

“Which was true, for eight days later we were awakened in the middle of the night by a terrible hubbub on the ground floor. From our landing we heard several voices, swearing and raging under the trap-door which they were trying to raise, to which the padlock offered but feeble resistance, for a strong push broke it off and the door opened with a great noise. My mother and the servant rushed to the bureau, pushed and dragged it to the door, whilst some men came out of the cellar, walked to the door, grumbling, opened it, saw the drawbridge up, unfastened the rope and let it fall down with a loud bang, and then the voices grew fainter till they disappeared in the wood. But go to sleep after all that! We stayed there waiting for the dawn, and though all danger was over, not daring to speak aloud!

“At last the day broke. We moved the bureau, and my mother, brave as ever, went down first, carrying a candle. The yawning trap-door exposed the black hole of a cellar, the entrance door was wide open and the bridge down. We called the gardener,

who did not answer, and whose hut was empty. My mother did not wait till afternoon this time, but jumped on her donkey and went down to the château.

"Mme. de Combray was dressing. She expected my mother and knew her object in coming so well that without waiting for her to tell her story, she flew out like most people, who, having no good reason to give, resort to angry words, and cried as soon as she entered the room :

"'You are mad ; mad enough to be shut up ! You take my house for a resort of bandits and counterfeiters ! I am sorry enough that I ever brought you here !'

"'And I that I ever came !'

"'Very well, then—go !'

"'I am going to-morrow. I came to tell you so.'

"'A safe return to you !' On which Mme. de Combray turned her back, and my mother retraced her steps to the tower in a state of exasperation, fully determined to take the boat for Paris without further delay.

"Early next morning we made ready. The gardener was at the door with his cart, coming and going for our luggage, while the servant put the soup on the table. My mother took only two or three spoonfuls and I did the same, as I hate soup. The servant alone emptied her plate ! We went down to Roule where the gardener had scarcely left us when the servant was seized with frightful vomiting. My mother and I were also slightly nauseated, but the poor girl retained nothing, happily for her, for we re-

turned to Paris convinced that the gardener, being left alone for a moment, had thrown some poison into the soup."

"And did nothing happen afterwards?"

"Nothing."

"And you heard nothing more from Tournebut?"

"Nothing, until 1808, when we learned that the mail had been attacked and robbed near Falaise by a band of armed men commanded by Mme. de Combray's daughter, Mme. Acquet de Férolles, disguised as a hussar! Then, that Mme. Acquet had been arrested as well as her lover (Le Chevalier), her husband, her mother, her lawyer and servants and those of Mme. de Combray at Tournebut; and finally that Mme. de Combray had been condemned to imprisonment and the pillory, Mme. Acquet, her lover, the lawyer (Lefebvre) and several others, to death."

"And the husband?"

"Released; he was a spy."

"Was your mother called as a witness?"

"No, happily, they knew nothing about us. Besides, what would she have said?"

"Nothing, except that the people who frightened you so much, must surely have belonged to the band; that they had forced the trap-door, after a nocturnal expedition, on which they had been pursued as far as a subterranean entrance, which without doubt led to the cellar."

After we had chatted a while on this subject Moisson wished me good-night, and I took up Balzac's *chef d'œuvre* and resumed my reading. But

I only read a few lines ; my imagination was wandering elsewhere. It was a long distance from Balzac's idealism to the realism of Moisson, which awakened in me memories of the stories and melodramas of Ducray-Duminil, of Guilbert de Pixérécourt—"Alexis, ou la Maisonnette dans les Bois," "Victor, ou l'Enfant de la Forêt,"—and many others of the same date and style so much discredited nowadays. And I thought that what caused the discredit now, accounted for their vogue formerly ; that they had a substratum of truth under a mass of absurdity ; that these stories of brigands in their traditional haunts, forests, caverns and subterranean passages, charmed by their likelihood the readers of those times to whom an attack on a coach by highwaymen with blackened faces was as natural an occurrence as a railway accident is to us, and that in what seems pure extravaganza to us they only saw a scarcely exaggerated picture of things that were continually happening under their eyes. In the reports published by M. Félix Rocquain we can learn the state of France during the Directory and the early years of the Commune. The roads, abandoned since 1792, were worn into such deep ruts, that to avoid them the waggoners made long circuits in ploughed land, and the post-chaises would slip and sink into the muddy bogs from which it was impossible to drag them except with oxen. At every step through the country one came to a deserted hamlet, a roofless house, a burned farm, a château in ruins. Under the indifferent eyes of a police that cared only for politics, and of gendarmes recruited in such a fashion that a

criminal often recognised an old comrade in the one who arrested him; bands of vagabonds and scamps of all kinds had been formed; deserters, refractories, fugitives from the pretended revolutionary army, and terrorists without employment, "the scum," said François de Nantes, "of the Revolution and the war; 'lanterneurs' of '91, 'guillotineurs' of '93, 'sabreurs' of the year III, 'assommeurs' of the year IV, 'fusilleurs' of the year V." All this canaille lived only by rapine and murder, camped in the forests, ruins and deserted quarries like that at Gueudreville, an underground passage one hundred feet long by thirty broad, the headquarters of the band of Orgères, a thoroughly organised company of bandits—chiefs, subchiefs, storekeepers, spies, couriers, barbers, surgeons, dressmakers, cooks, preceptors for the "gosses," and curé!

And this brigandage was rampant everywhere. There was so little safety in the Midi from Marseilles to Toulon and Toulouse that one could not travel without an escort. In the Var, the Bouches-du-Rhône, Vaucluse, from Digne and Draguignan, to Avignon and Aix, one had to pay ransom. A placard placed along the roads informed the traveller that unless he paid a hundred francs in advance, he risked being killed. The receipt given to the driver served as a passport. Theft by violence was so much the custom that certain villages in the Lower Alps were openly known as the abode of those who had no other occupation. On the banks of the Rhône travellers were charitably warned not to put up at certain



solitary inns for fear of not reappearing therefrom. On the Italian frontier they were the "barbets"; in the North the "garroteurs"; in the Ardèche the "bande noire"; in the Centre the "Chiffoniers"; in Artois, Picardie, the Somme, Seine-Inférieure, the Chartrain country, the Orléanais, Loire-Inférieure, Orne, Sarthe, Mayenne, Ille-et-Vilaine, etc., and Ile-de-France to the very gates of Paris, but above all in Calvados, Finistère and La Manche where royalism served as their flag, the "chauffeurs" and the bands of "Grands Gars" and "Coupe et Tranche," which under pretence of being Chouans attacked farms or isolated dwellings, and inspired such terror that if one of them were arrested neither witness nor jury could be found to condemn him. Politics evidently had nothing to do with these exploits; it was a private war. And the Chouans professed to wage it only against the government. So long as they limited themselves to fighting the gendarmes or national guards in bands of five or six hundred, to invading defenceless places in order to cut down the trees of liberty, burn the municipal papers, and pillage the coffers of the receivers and school-teachers—(the State funds having the right to return to their legitimate owner, the King), they could be distinguished from professional malefactors. But when they stopped coaches, extorted ransom from travellers and shot constitutional priests and purchasers of the national property, the distinction became too subtle. There was no longer any room for it in the year VIII and IX when, vigorous measures having almost cleared



the country of the bands of "chauffeurs" and other bandits who infested it, the greater number of those who had escaped being shot or guillotined joined what remained of the royalist army, last refuge of brigandage.

In such a time Moisson's adventure was not at all extraordinary. We can only accuse it of being too simple. It was the mildest scene of a huge melodrama in which he and his mother had played the part of supers. But slight as was the episode, it had all the attraction of the unknown for me. Of Tournebut and its owners I knew nothing. Who, in reality, was this Mme. de Combray, sanctified by Balzac? A fanatic, or an intriguer?—And her daughter Mme. Acquet? A heroine or a lunatic?—and the lover? A hero or an adventurer?—And the husband, the lawyer and the friends of the house? Mme. Acquet more than all piqued my curiosity. The daughter of a good house disguised as a hussar to stop the mail like Choppart! This was not at all commonplace! Was she young and pretty? Moisson knew nothing about it; he had never seen her or her lover or husband, Mme. de Combray having quarrelled with all of them.

I was most anxious to learn more, but to do that it would be necessary to consult the report of the trial in the record office at Rouen. I never had time. I mentioned it to M. Gustave Bord, to Frédéric Masson and M. de la Sicotière, and thought no more about it even after the interesting article published in the *Temps*, by M. Ernest Daudet, until

walking one day with Lenôtre in the little that is left of old Paris of the Cité, the house in the Rue Chanoinesse, where Balzac lodged Mme. de la Chanterie, reminded me of Moisson, whose adventure I narrated to Lenôtre, at that time finishing his "Conspiracy de la Rouërie." That was sufficient to give him the idea of studying the records of the affair of 1807, which no one had consulted before him. A short time after he told me that the tower of Tournebut was still in existence, and that he was anxious for us to visit it, the son-in-law of the owner of the Château of Aubevoye, M. Constantin, having kindly offered to conduct us.

On a fine autumn morning the train left us at the station that served the little village of Aubevoye, whose name has twice been heard in the Courts of Justice, once in the trial of Mme. de Combray and once in that of Mme. de Jeufosse. Those who have no taste for these sorts of excursions cannot understand their charm. Whether it be a little historical question to be solved, an unknown or badly authenticated fact to be elucidated, this document hunt with its deceptions and surprises is the most amusing kind of chase, especially in company with a delver like Lenôtre, endowed with an admirable *flair* that always puts him on the right track. There was, moreover, a particular attraction in this old forgotten tower, in which we alone were interested, and in examining into Moisson's story !

Of the château that had been built by the Marechal de Marillac, and considerably enlarged by Mme. de

Combray, nothing, unhappily, remains but the out-buildings, a terrace overlooking the Seine, the court of honour turned into a lawn, an avenue of old limes and the ancient fence. A new building replaced the old one fifty years ago. The little château, "Gros-Mesnil," near the large one has recently been restored.

But the general effect is the same as in 1804. Seeing the great woods that hug the outer wall so closely, one realises how well they lent themselves to the mysterious comings and goings, to the secret councils, to the rôle destined for it by Mme. de Combray, preparing the finest room for the arrival of the King or the Comte d'Artois, and in both the great and little château, arranging hiding-places, one of which alone could accommodate forty armed men.

The tower is still there, far from the château, at the summit of a wooded hill in the centre of a clearing, which commands the river valley. It is a squat, massive construction, of forbidding aspect, such as Moisson described, with thick walls, and windows so narrow that they look more like loopholes. It seems as if it might originally have been one of the guard-houses or watch-towers erected on the heights from Nantes to Paris, like the tower of Montjoye whose ditch is recognisable in the Forest of Marly, or those of Montaigu and Hennemont, whose ruins were still visible in the last century. Some of these towers were converted into mills or pigeon-houses. Ours, whose upper story and pointed roof had been demolished and replaced by a platform at an uncertain date, was flanked by a wooden mill, burnt before the

Revolution, for it is not to be found in Cassini's chart which shows all in the region. The tower and its approaches are still known as the "burnt mill."

There remains no trace of the excavation which was in front of the entrance in 1804, and which must have been the last vestige of an old moat. The threshold crossed, we are in the circular chamber; at the end facing the door is the window, the bars of which have been taken down; on the left a modern chimneypiece replaces the old one, and on the right is the staircase, in good condition. The trap-door has disappeared from under it, the cellar being abandoned as useless. On the first floor as on the second, where the partitions have been removed, there are still traces of them, with fragments of wall-paper. The very little daylight that filters through the windows justifies Mme. Moisson's exclamation, "It is a prison!" The platform, from which the view is very fine, has been renewed, like the staircase. But from top to bottom all corresponds with Moisson's description.

All that remained now was to find out how one could get into the cellar from outside. We had two excellent guides; our kind host, M. Constantin, and M. l'Abbé Drouin, the curé of Aubevoye, who knew all the local traditions. They mentioned the "Grotto of the Hermit!" O Ducray-Duminil!—Thou again!

The grotto is an old quarry in the side of the hill towards the Seine, below the tower and having no

apparent communication with it, but so situated that an underground passage of a few yards would unite them. The grotto being now almost filled up, the entrance to this passage has disappeared. Looking at it, so innocent in appearance now under the brush and brambles, I seemed to see some Chouan by star-light, eye and ear alert, throw himself into it like a rabbit into its hole, and creep through to the tower, to sleep fully dressed on the pallet on the second floor. Evidently this tower, planned as were all Mme. de Combray's abodes, was one of the many refuges arranged by the Chouans from the coast of Normandy to Paris and known only to themselves.

But why was Mme. Moisson accommodated there without being taken into her hostess's confidence? If Mme. de Combray wished to avert suspicion by having two women and a child there, she might have told them so; and if she thought Mme. Moisson too excitable to hear such a confession, she should not have exposed her to nocturnal mysteries that could only tend to increase her excitement! When Phélippeaux was questioned, during the trial of Georges Cadoudal, about Moisson's father, who had disappeared, he replied that he lived in the street and island of Saint-Louis near the new bridge; that he was an engraver and manager of a button factory; that Mme. Moisson had a servant named R. Petit-Jean, married to a municipal guard. Was it through fear of this woman's writing indiscreetly to her husband that Mme. de Combray remained silent? But in any case, why the tower?



However this may be, the exactness of Moisson's reminiscences was proved. But the trap-door had not been forced, as he believed, by Chouans fleeing after some nocturnal expedition. This point was already decided by the first documents that Lenôtre had collected for this present work. There was no expedition of the sort in the neighbourhood of Tournebut during the summer of 1804. They would not have risked attracting attention to the château where was hidden the only man whom the Chouans of Normandy judged capable of succeeding Georges, and whom they called "Le Grand Alexandre"—the Vicomte Robert d'Aché. Hunted through Paris like all the royalists denounced by Querelle, he had managed to escape the searchers, to go out in one of his habitual disguises when the gates were reopened, to get to Normandy by the left bank of the Seine and take refuge with his old friend at Tournebut, where he lived for fourteen months under the name of Deslorières, his presence there never being suspected by the police.

He was certainly, as well as Bonnœil, Mme. de Combray's eldest son, one of the three guests with whom Moisson took supper on the evening of his arrival. The one who was always playing cards or tric-trac with the Marquise, and whom she called her lawyer, might well have been d'Aché himself. As to the stealthy visitors at the tower, given the presence of d'Aché at Tournebut, it is highly probable that they were only passing by there to confer with him, taking his orders secretly in the woods without even



appearing at the château, and then disappearing as mysteriously as they had come.

For d'Aché in his retreat still plotted and made an effort to resume, with the English minister, the intrigue that had just failed so miserably, Moreau having withdrawn at the last minute. The royalist party was less intimidated than exasperated at the deaths of the Duke d'Enghien, Georges and Pichegru, and did not consider itself beaten even by the proclamation of the Empire, which had not excited in the provinces—above all in the country—the enthusiasm announced in the official reports.

In reality it had been accepted by the majority of the population as a government of expediency, which would provisionally secure threatened interests, but whose duration was anything but certain. It was too evident that the Empire was Napoleon, as the Consulate had been Bonaparte—that everything rested on the head of one man. If an infernal machine removed him, royalty would have a good opportunity. His life was not the only stake; his luck itself was very hazardous. Founded on victory, the Empire was condemned to be always victorious. War could undo what war had done. And this uneasiness is manifest in contemporary memoirs and correspondence. More of the courtiers of the new régime than one imagines were as sceptical as Mme. Mère, economising her revenues and saying to her mocking daughters, “You will perhaps be very glad of them, some day!” In view of a possible catastrophe many of these kept open a door for retreat towards the

Bourbons, and vaguely encouraged hopes of assistance that could only be depended on in case of their success, but which the royalists believed in as positive and immediate. As to the disaster which might bring it about, they hoped for its early coming, and promised it to the impatient Chouans—the disembarkation of an Anglo-Russian army—the rising of the West—the entrance of Louis XVIII into his good town of Paris—and the return of the Corsican to his island! Predictions that were not so wild after all. Ten years later it was an accomplished fact in almost all its details. And what are ten years in politics? Frotté, Georges, Pichegru, d'Aché, would only have had to fold their arms. They would have seen the Empire crumble by its own weight.

We made these reflections on returning to the château while looking at the terrace in the setting sun, at the peaceful winding of the Seine and the lovely autumn landscape that Mme. de Combray and d'Aché had so often looked at, at the same place and hour, little foreseeing the sad fate the future had in store for them.

The misfortunes of the unhappy woman—the deplorable affair of Quesnay where the coach with state funds was attacked by Mme. Acquet's men, for the profit of the royalist exchequer and of Le Chevalier; the assassination of d'Aché, sold to the imperial police by La Vaubadon, his mistress, and the cowardly Doulcet de Pontécoulant, who does not boast of it in his "*Mémoires*,"—have been the themes of several tales, romances and novels, wherein fancy plays too

great a part, and whose misinformed authors, Hippolyte Bonnelier, Comtesse de Mirabeau, Chennevières, etc., have taken great advantage of the liberty used in works of imagination. There is only one reproach to be made—that they did not have the genius of Balzac. But we may criticise more severely the so-called historical writings about Mme. de Combray, her family and residences, and the Château of Tournebut which M. Homberg shows us flanked by four feudal towers, and which MM. Le Prévost and Bourdon say was demolished in 1807.

Mme. d'Abrantès, with her usual veracity, describes the luxurious furniture and huge lamps in the "labyrinths of Tournebut, of which one must, as it were, have a plan, so as not to lose one's way." She shows us Le Chevalier, crucifix in hand, haranguing the assailants in the wood of Quesnay (although he was in Paris that day to prove an alibi), and gravely adds, "I know some one who was in the coach and who alone survived, the seven other travellers having been massacred and their bodies left on the road." Now there was neither coach nor travellers, and no one was killed!

M. de la Sicotière's mistakes are still stranger. At the time that he was preparing his great work on "Frotté and the Norman Insurrections," he learned from M. Gustave Bord that I had some special facts concerning Mme. de Combray, and wrote to ask me about them. I sent him a résumé of Moisson's story, and asked him to verify its correctness. And on that he went finely astray.

Mme. de Combray had two residences besides her house at Rouen; one at Aubevoye, where she had lived for a long while, the other thirty leagues away, at Donnay, in the department of Orne, where she no longer went, as her son-in-law had settled himself there. Two towers have the same name of Tournebut; the one at Aubevoye is ours; the other, some distance from Donnay, did not belong to Mme. de Combray.

Convinced solely by the assertions of MM. Le Prévost and Bourdon that in 1804 the Château of Aubevoye and its tower no longer existed, and that Mme. de Combray occupied Donnay at that date, M. de la Sicotière naturally mistook one Tournebut for the other, did not understand a single word of Moisson's story, which he treated as a chimera, and in his book acknowledges my communications in this disdainful note:

“Confusion has arisen in many minds between the two Tournebutts, so different, however, and at such a distance from each other, and has given birth to many strange and romantic legends; inaccessible retreats arranged for outlaws and bandits in the old tower, nocturnal apparitions, innocent victims paying with their lives the misfortune of having surprised the secrets of these terrible guests. . . .”

It is pleasant to see M. de la Sicotière point out the confusion he alone experienced. But there is better to come! Here is a writer who gives us in two large volumes the history of Norman Chouannerie. There is little else spoken of in his book than disguises, false names, false papers, ambushes, kidnappings, attacks on



coaches, subterranean passages, prisons, escapes, child spies and female captains! He states himself that the affair of the Forest of Quesnay was "tragic, strange and mysterious!" And at the same time he condemns as "strange" and "romantic" the simplest of all these adventures—that of Moisson! He scoffs at his hiding-places in the roofs of the old château, and it is precisely in the roofs of the old château that the police found the famous refuge which could hold forty men with ease. He calls the retreats arranged for the outlaws and bandits "legendary," at the same time that he gives two pages to the enumeration of the holes, vaults, wells, pits, grottoes and caverns in which these same bandits and outlaws found safety! So that M. de la Sicotière seems to be laughing at himself!

I should reproach myself if I did not mention, as a curiosity, the biography of M. and Mme. de Combray, united in one person in the "Dictionnaire Historique" (!!!) of Larousse. It is unique of its kind. Names, places and facts are all wrong. And the crowning absurdity is that, borne out by these fancies, fragments are given of the supposed *Mémoires* that Félicie (!) de Combray wrote after the Restoration—forgetting that she was guillotined under the Empire!

With M. Ernest Daudet we return to history. No one had seriously studied the crime of Quesnay before him. Some years ago he gave the correct story of it in *Le Temps* and we could not complain of its being only what he meant it to be—a faithful and rapid résumé. Besides, M. Daudet had only at his disposal the portfolios 8,170, 8,171, and 8,172 of the

Series F 7 of the National Archives, and the reports sent to Réal by Savoye-Rollin and Licquet, this cunning detective beside whom Balzac's Corentin seems a mere schoolboy. Consequently the family drama escapes M. Daudet, who, for that matter, did not have to concern himself with it. It would not have been possible to do better than he did with the documents within his reach.

Lenôtre has pushed his researches further. He has not limited himself to studying, bit by bit, the voluminous report of the trial of 1808, which fills a whole cupboard; to comparing and opposing the testimony of the witnesses one against the other, examining the reports and enquiries, disentangling the real names from the false, truth from error—in a word, investigating the whole affair, a formidable task of which he only gives us the substance here. Aided by his wonderful instinct and the persistency of the investigator, he has managed to obtain access to family papers, some of which were buried in old trunks relegated to the attics, and in these papers has found precious documents which clear up the depths of this affair of Quesnay where the mad passion of one poor woman plays the greatest part.

And let no one imagine that he is going to read a romance in these pages. It is an *historical* study in the severest meaning of the word. Lenôtre mentions no fact that he cannot prove. He risks no hypothesis without giving it as such, and admits no fancy in the slightest detail. If he describes one of Mme. Acquet's toilettes, it is because it is given in some in-



terrogation. I have seen him so scrupulous on this point, as to suppress all picturesqueness that could be put down to his imagination. In no *cause célèbre* has justice shown more exactitude in exposing the facts. In short, here will be found all the qualities that ensured the success of his "Conspiration de la Rouërie," the chivalrous beginning of the Chouannerie that he now shows us in its decline, reduced to highway robbery !

As for me, if I have lingered too long by this old tower, it is because it suggested this book ; and we owe some gratitude to these mute witnesses of a past which they keep in our remembrance.

VICTORIEN SARDOU.



# The House of the Combrays

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## CHAPTER I

### THE TREACHERY OF JEAN-PIERRE QUERELLE

LATE at night on January the 25th, 1804, the First Consul, who, as it often happened, had arisen in order to work till daylight, was looking over the latest police reports that had been placed on his desk.

His death was talked of everywhere. It had already been announced positively in London, Germany and Holland. "To assassinate Bonaparte" was a sort of game, in which the English were specially active. From their shores, well-equipped and plentifully supplied with money, sailed many who were desirous of gaining the great stake,—obdurate Chouans and fanatical royalists who regarded as an act of piety the crime that would rid France of the usurper. What gave most cause for alarm in these reports, usually unworthy of much attention, was the fact that all of them were agreed on one point—Georges Cadoudal had disappeared. Since this man, formidable by reason of his courage and tenacity of purpose, had

declared war without mercy on the First Consul, the police had never lost sight of him. It was known that he was staying in England, and he was under surveillance there; but if it was true that he had escaped this espionage, the danger was imminent, and the predicted "earthquake" at hand.

Bonaparte, more irritated than uneasy at these tales, wished to remove all doubt about the matter. He mistrusted Fouché, whose devotion he had reason to suspect, and who besides had not at this time—officially at least—the superintendence of the police; and he had attached to himself a dangerous spy, the Belgian Réal. It was on this man that Bonaparte, on certain occasions, preferred to rely. Réal was a typical detective. The friend of Danton, he had in former days, organised the great popular manifestations that were to intimidate the Convention. He had penetrated the terrible depths of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and the Committee of Public Safety. He knew and understood how to make use of what remained of the old committees of sections, of "septembriseurs" without occupation, lacqueys, perfumers, dentists, dancing masters without pupils, all the refuse of the revolution, the women of the Palais-Royal: such was the army he commanded, having as his lieutenants Desmarets, an unfrocked priest, and Veyrat, formerly a Genevese convict, who had been branded and whipped by the public executioner. Réal and these two subalterns were the principal actors in the drama that we are about to relate.

On this night Bonaparte sent in haste for Réal.

In his usual manner, by brief questions he soon learned the number of royalists confined in the tower of the Temple or at Bicêtre, their names, and on what suspicions they had been arrested. Quickly satisfied on all these points he ordered that before daylight four of the most deeply implicated of the prisoners should be taken before a military commission; if they revealed nothing they were to be shot in twenty-four hours. Aroused at five o'clock in the morning, Desmarets was told to prepare the list, and the first two names indicated were those of Picot and Lebourgeois. Picot was one of Frotté's old officers, and during the wars of the Chouannerie had been commander-in-chief of the Auge division. He had earned the surname of "Egorge-Bleus" and was a Chevalier of St. Louis. Lebourgeois, keeper of a coffee-house at Rouen, had been accused about the year 1800 of taking part in an attack on a stage-coach, was acquitted, and like his friend Picot, had emigrated to England. Both of these men had been denounced by a professional instigator as having "been heard to say" that they had come to attempt the life of the First Consul. They had been arrested at Pont-Audemer as soon as they returned to France, and had now been imprisoned in the Temple for nearly a year.

To these two victims Desmarets added another Chouan, Piogé, nicknamed "Without Pity" or "Strike-to-Death," and Desol de Grisolles, an old companion of Georges and "a very dangerous royalist." And then, to show his zeal, he added a fifth name to the list, that of Querelle, ex-surgeon of

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marine, arrested four months previously, under slight suspicion, but described in the report as a poor-spirited creature of whom "something might be expected."

"This one," said Bonaparte on reading the name of Querelle, and the accompanying note, "is more of an intriguer than a fanatic; he will speak."

The same day the five, accused of enticing away soldiers and corresponding with the enemies of the Republic, were led before a military commission over which General Duplessis presided; Desol and Piogé were acquitted, returned to the hands of the government and immediately reincarcerated. Picot, Lebourgeois and Querelle, condemned to death, were transferred to the Abbaye there to await their execution on the following day.

"There must be no delay, you understand," said Bonaparte, "I will not have it."

But nevertheless it was necessary to give a little time for the courage of the prisoners to fail, and for the police to aid in bringing this about.

There was nothing to be expected of Picot or Lebourgeois; they knew nothing of the conspiracy and were resigned to their fate; but their deaths could be used to intimidate Querelle who was less firm, and the authorities did not fail to make the most of the opportunity. He was allowed to be present during all the preparations; he witnessed the arrival of the soldiers who were to shoot his companions; he saw them depart and was immediately told that it was "now his turn." Then to prolong his agony he was



left alone in the gloomy chamber where Maillard's tribunal had formerly sat. This tragic room was lighted by a small, strongly-barred window looking out on the square. From this window the doomed man saw the soldiers who were to take him to the plain of Grenelle drawn up in the narrow square and perceived the crowd indulging in rude jokes while they waited for him to come out. One of the soldiers had dismounted and tied his horse to the bars of the window; while within the prison the noise of quick footsteps was heard, doors opening and shutting heavily, all indicating the last preparations. . . .

Querelle remained silent for a long time, crouched up in a corner. Suddenly, as if fear had driven him mad, he began to call desperately, crying that he did not want to die, that he would tell all he knew, imploring his gaolers to fly to the First Consul and obtain his pardon, at the same time calling with sobs upon General Murat, Governor of Paris, swearing that he would make a complete avowal if only he would command the soldiers to return to their quarters. Although Murat could see nothing in these ravings but a pretext for gaining a few hours of life, he felt it his duty to refer the matter to the First Consul, who sent word of it to Réal. All this had taken some time and meanwhile the unfortunate Querelle, seeing the soldiers still under his window and the impatient crowd clamouring for his appearance, was in the last paroxysm of despair. When Réal opened the door he saw, cowering on the flags and shaking with fear, a little man with a pock-

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marked face, black hair, a thin and pointed nose and grey eyes continually contracted by a nervous affection.

“You have announced your intention of making some revelations,” said Réal; “I have come to hear them.”

But the miserable creature could scarcely articulate. Réal was obliged to reassure him, to have him carried into another room, and to hold out hopes of mercy if his confessions were sufficiently important. At last, still trembling, and in broken words, with great effort the prisoner confessed that he had been in Paris for six months, having come from London with Georges Cadoudal and six of his most faithful officers; they had been joined there by a great many more from Bretagne or England; there were now more than one hundred of them hidden in Paris, waiting for an opportunity to carry off Bonaparte, or to assassinate him. He added more details as he grew calmer. A boat from the English navy had landed them at Biville near Dieppe; there a man from Eu or Tréport had met them and conducted them a little way from the shore to a farm of which Querelle did not know the name. They left again in the night, and in this way, from farm to farm, they journeyed to Paris where they did not meet until Georges called them together; they received their pay in a manner agreed upon. His own share was deposited under a stone in the Champs Élysées every week, and he fetched it from there. A “gentleman” had come to meet them at the last stage of their journey, near the village of

Saint-Leu-Taverny, to prepare for their entry into Paris and help them to pass the barrier.

One point stood out boldly in all these revelations : Georges was in Paris ! Réal, whose account we have followed, left Querelle and hastened to the Tuileries. The First Consul was in the hands of Constant, his valet, when the detective was announced. Noticing his pallor, Bonaparte supposed he had just come from the execution of the three condemned men.

“It is over, isn’t it ?” he said.

“No, General,” replied Réal.

And seeing his hesitation the Consul continued : “You may speak before Constant.”

“Well then,—Georges and his band are in Paris.”

On hearing the name of the only man he feared Bonaparte turned round quickly, made the sign of the cross, and taking Réal by the sleeve led him into the adjoining room.

So the First Consul’s police, so numerous, so careful, and so active, the police who according to the *Moniteur* “had eyes everywhere,” had been at fault for six months ! A hundred reports were daily piled up on Réal’s table, and not one of them had mentioned the goings and comings of Georges, who travelled with his Chouans from Dieppe to Paris, supported a little army, and planned his operations with as much liberty as if he were in London. These revelations were so alarming that they preferred not to believe them. Querelle must have invented this absurd story as a last resource for prolonging his life. To set at rest all doubt on this subject he must be

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convinced of the imposture. If it was true that he had accompanied the "brigands" from the sea to Paris, he could, on travelling over the route, show their different halting-places. If he could do this his life was to be spared.

From the 27th January, when he made his first declarations, Querelle was visited every night by Réal or Desmarets who questioned him minutely. The unfortunate creature had sustained such a shock, that, even while maintaining his avowals, he would be seized with fits of madness, and beating his breast, would fall on his knees and call on those whom fear of death had caused him to denounce, imploring their pardon. When he learned what was expected of him he appeared to be overwhelmed, not at the number of victims he was going to betray, but because he was aghast at the idea of leading the detectives over a road that he had traversed only at night, and that he feared he might not remember. The expedition set out on February 3d. Réal had taken the precaution to have an escort of gendarmes for the prisoner whom Georges and his followers might try to rescue. The detachment was commanded by a zealous and intelligent officer, Lieutenant Manginot, assisted by a giant called Pasque, an astute man celebrated for the sureness of his attack. They left Paris at dawn by the Saint-Denis gate and took the road to l'Isle-Adam.

The first day's search was without result. Querelle thought he remembered that a house in the village of Taverny had sheltered the Chouans the night before their entry into Paris; but at the time he had not paid

any attention to localities, and in spite of his efforts, he could be positive of nothing. The next day they took the Pontoise road from Pierrelaye to Franconville,—with no more success. They returned towards Taverny by Ermont, le Plessis-Bouchard and the Château de Boissy. Querelle, who knew that his life was at stake, showed a feverish eagerness which was not shared by Pasque nor Manginot, who were now fully persuaded that the prisoner had only wanted to gain time, or some chance of escape. They thought of abandoning the search and returning to Paris, but Querelle begged so vehemently for twenty-four hours' reprieve that Manginot weakened. The third day, therefore, they explored the environs of Taverny and the borders of the forest as far as Bessancourt. Querelle now led them by chance, thinking he recognised a group of trees, a turn of the road, even imagining he had found a farm "by the particular manner in which the dog barked."

At last, worn out, the little band were returning to Paris when, on passing through the village of Saint-Leu, Querelle gave a triumphant cry! He had just recognised the long-looked for house, and he gave so exact a description of it and its inhabitants that Pasque did not hesitate to interrogate the proprietor, a vine-dresser named Denis Lamotte. He laid great stress on the fact that he had a son in the service of an officer of the Consul's guard; his other son, Vincent Lamotte, lived with him. The worthy man appeared very much surprised at the invasion of his house, but his peasant cunning could not long withstand the



professional cleverness of the detective, and after a few minutes he gave up.

He admitted that at the beginning of July last he had received a person calling himself Houvel, or Saint-Vincent, who under pretence of buying some wine, had proposed to him to lodge seven or eight persons for a night. Lamotte had accepted. On the evening of the 30th August Houvel had reappeared and told him that the men would arrive that night. He went to fetch them in the neighbourhood of l'Isle-Adam, and his son Vincent accompanied him to serve as guide to the travellers, whom he met on the borders of the wood of La Muette. They numbered seven, one of whom, very stout and covered with sweat, stopped in the wood to change his shirt. They all appeared to be very tired, and only two of them were on horseback. They arrived at Lamotte's house at Saint-Leu about two o'clock in the morning; the horses were stabled and the men stretched themselves out on the straw in one of the rooms of the house. Lamotte noticed that each of them carried two pistols. They slept long and had dinner about twelve o'clock. Two individuals, who had driven from Paris and left their cabriolets, one at the "White Cross" the other at the "Crown," talked with the travellers who, about seven o'clock, resumed their journey to the capital. Each of the "individuals" took one in his cab; two went on horseback and the others awaited the phaeton which ran between Taverny and Paris.

This account tallied so well with Querelle's decla-

rations that there was no longer any room for doubt. The band of seven was composed of Georges and his staff; the "stout man" was Georges himself, and Querelle gave the names of the others, all skilful and formidable Chouans. Lamotte, on his part, did not hesitate to name the one who had conducted the "brigands" to the wood of La Muette. He was called Nicolas Massignon, a farmer of Jouy-le-Comte. Pasque set out with his gendarmes, and Massignon admitted that he had brought the travellers from across the Oise to the Avenue de Nesles, his brother, Jean-Baptiste Massignon, a farmer of Saint-Lubin, having conducted them thither. Pasque immediately took the road to Saint-Lubin and marched all night. At four o'clock in the morning he arrived at the house of Jean-Baptiste, who, surprised in jumping out of bed, remembered that he had put up some men that his brother-in-law, Quantin-Rigaud, a cultivator at Auteuil, had brought there. Pasque now held four links of the chain, and Manginot started for the country to follow the track of the conspirators to the sea. Savary had preceded him in order to surprise a new disembarkation announced by Querelle. Arrived at the coast he perceived, at some distance, an English brig tacking, but in spite of all their precautions to prevent her taking alarm, the vessel did not come in. They saw her depart on a signal given on shore by a young man on horseback, whom Savary's gendarmes pursued as far as the forest of Eu, where he disappeared.

In twelve days, always accompanied by Querelle,

Manginot had ended his quest, and put into the hands of Réal such a mass of depositions that it was possible, as we shall show, to reconstruct the voyage of Georges and his companions to Paris from the sea.

On the night of August 23, 1803, the English cutter "Vincejo," commanded by Captain Wright, had landed the conspirators at the foot of the cliffs of Biville, a steep wall of rocks and clay three hundred and twenty feet high. From time immemorial, in the place called the hollow of Parfonval there had existed an "estamperche," a long cord fixed to some piles, which was used by the country people for descending to the beach. It was necessary to pull oneself up this long rope by the arms, a most painful proceeding for a man as corpulent as Georges. At last the seven Chouans were gathered at the top of the cliff, and under the guidance of Troche, son of the former procureur of the commune of Eu, and one of the most faithful adherents of the party, they arrived at the farm of La Poterie, near the hamlet of Heudelimont, about two leagues from the coast. Whilst the farmer, Detrimont, was serving them drinks, a mysterious personage, who called himself M. Beaumont, came to consult with them. He was a tall man, with the figure of a Hercules, a swarthy complexion, a high forehead and black eyebrows and hair. He disappeared in the early morning.

Georges and his companions spent the whole of the 24th at La Poterie. They left the farm in the night and marched five leagues to Preuseville, where a M. Loisel sheltered them. The route was cleverly

planned not to leave the vast forest of Eu, which provided shaded roads, and in case of alarm, almost impenetrable hiding-places. On the night of the 26th they again covered five leagues, through the forest of Eu, arriving at Aumale at two o'clock in the morning, and lodging with a man called Monnier, who occupied the ancient convent of the Dominican Nuns. "The stout man" rode a black horse which Monnier, for want of a stable, hid in a corridor in the house, the halter tied to the key of the door. As for the men, they threw themselves pell-mell on some straw, and did not go out during the day. M. Beaumont had reappeared at Aumale. He arrived on horseback and, after passing an hour with the conspirators, had left in the direction of Quincampoix. They had seen him again with Boniface Coliaux, called Boni, at their next stage, Feuquières, four leagues off, which they reached on the night of the 27th. They passed the 28th with Leclerc, five leagues further on, at the farm of Monceaux which belonged to the Count d'Hardivilliers, situated in the commune of Saint-Omer-en-Chaussée. From there, avoiding Beauvais, the son of Leclerc had guided them to the house of Quentin-Rigaud at Auteuil, and on the 29th he had taken them to Massignon, the farmer of Saint-Lubin, who in turn had passed them on, the next day, to his brother Nicolas, charged, as we have seen, to help them cross the Oise and direct them to the wood of La Muette, where Denis Lamotte, the vine-dresser of Saint-Leu, had come to fetch them.

Such was the result of Manginot's enquiries. He



had reconstructed Georges' itinerary with most remarkable perspicacity and this was the more important as the chain of stations from the sea to Paris necessitated long and careful organisation, and as the conspirators used the route frequently. Thus, two men mentioned in the disembarkation of August 23d had returned to Biville in mid-September. On October 2d Georges and three of his officers, coming from Paris, had again presented themselves before Lamotte, who had conducted them to the wood of La Muette, where Massignon was waiting for them. It was proved that their journeys had been made with perfect regularity; the same guides, the same night marches, the same hiding-places by day. The house of Boniface Colliaux at Feuquières, that of Monnier at Aumale, and the farm of La Poterie seemed to be the principal meeting-places. Another passage took place in the second fortnight of November, and another in December, corresponding to a new disembarkation. In January, 1804, Georges made the journey for the fourth time, to await at Biville the English corvette bringing Pichegru, the Marquis de Rivière and four other conspirators. A fisherman called Étienne Horné gave some valuable details of this arrival. He had noticed particularly the man who appeared to be the leader—"a fat man, with a full, rather hard face, round-shouldered, and with a slight trouble in his arms."

"These gentlemen," he added, "usually arrived at night, and left about midnight; they were satisfied with our humble fare, and always kept together in a corner, talking."



When the tide was full Horné went down to the beach to watch for the sloop. The password was "Jacques," to which the men in the boat replied "Thomas."

Manginot, as may well be imagined, arrested all who in any way had assisted the conspirators, and hurried them off to Paris. The tower of the Temple became crowded with peasants, with women in Normandy caps, and fishermen of Dieppe, dumbfounded at finding themselves in the famous place where the monarchy had suffered its last torments. But these were the only small fry of the conspiracy, and the First Consul, who liked to pose as the victim exposed to the blows of an entire party, could not with decency take these inoffensive peasants before a high court of justice. While waiting for chance or more treachery to reveal the refuge of Georges Cadoudal, the discovery of the organisers of the plot was most important, and this seemed well-nigh impossible, although Manginot had reason to think that the centre of the conspiracy was near Aumale or Feuquières.

His attention had been attracted by a deposition mentioning the black horse that Georges had ridden from Preuseville to Aumale—the one that the schoolmaster Monnier had hidden in a corridor of his house. With this slight clue he started for the country. There he learned that a workman called Saint-Aubin, who lived in the hamlet of Coppègueule, had been ordered to take the horse to an address on a letter which Monnier had given him. This man, when called upon to appear, remembered that he had led

the horse "to a fine house in the environs of Gournay." When he arrived there a servant had taken the animal to the stables, and a lady had come out and asked for the letter, but he denied all knowledge of the lady's name or the situation of the house.

Manginot resolved to search the country in company with Saint-Aubin, but he was either stupid or pretended to be so, and refused to give any assistance. He led the gendarmes six leagues, as far as Aumale, and said, at first, that he recognised the Château de Mercatet-sur-Villers, but on looking carefully at the avenues and the arrangement of the buildings, he declared he had never been there. The same thing happened at Beaulévrier and at Mothois; but on approaching Gournay his memory returned, and he led Manginot to a house in the hamlet of Saint-Clair which he asserted was the one to which Monnier had sent him. On entering the courtyard he recognised the servant to whom he had given the horse six months before, a groom named Joseph Planchon. Manginot instantly arrested the man, and then began his search.

The house belonged to an ex-officer of marine, François Robert d'Aché, who rarely occupied it, being an ardent sportsman and preferring his estates near Neufchâtel-en-Bray, where there was more game. Saint-Clair was occupied by Mme. d'Aché, an invalid who rarely left her room, and her two daughters, Louise and Alexandrine, as well as d'Aché's mother, a bedridden octogenarian, and a young man named Caqueray, who was also called the Chevalier de

Lorme, who farmed the lands of M. and Mme. d'Aché, whose property had recently been separated by law. Caqueray looked upon himself as one of the family, and Louise, the eldest girl, was betrothed to him.

Nothing could have been less suspicious than the members of this patriarchal household, who seemed to know nothing of politics, and whose tranquil lives were apparently unaffected by revolutions. The absence of the head of so united a family was the only astonishing thing about it. But Mme. d'Aché and her daughters explained that he was bored at Saint-Clair and usually lived in Rouen, that he hunted a great deal, and spent his time between his relatives who lived near Gaillon and friends at Saint-Germain-en-Laye. They could not say where he was at present, having had no news of him for two months.

But on questioning the servants Manginot learned some facts that changed the aspect of affairs. Lambert, the gardener, had recently been shot at Evreux, convicted of having taken part with a band of Chouans in an attack on the stage-coach, Caqueray's brother had just been executed for the same cause at Rouen. Constant Prévot, a farm hand, accused of having killed a gendarme, had been acquitted, but died soon after his return to Saint-Clair. Manginot had unearthed a nest of Chouans, and only when he learned that the description of d'Aché was singularly like that of the mysterious Beaumont who had been seen with Georges at La Poterie, Aumale and Feuquières, did he undersand the importance of

his discovery. After a rapid and minute inquiry, he took it upon himself to arrest every one at Saint-Clair, and sent an express to Réal, informing him of the affair, and asking for further instructions.

It had been the custom for several years, when a person was denounced to the police as an enemy of the government, or a simple malcontent, to have his name put up in Desmarets' office, and to add to it, in proportion to the denunciations, every bit of information that could help to make a complete portrait of the individual. That of d'Aché was consulted. There were found annotations of this sort: "By reason of his audacity he is one of the most important of the royalists," "Last December he took a passport at Rouen for Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where he was called by business," "His host at Saint-Germain, Brandin de Saint-Laurent, declares that he did not sleep there regularly, sometimes two, sometimes three days at a time." At last a letter was intercepted addressed to Mme. d'Aché, containing this phrase, which they recognised as Georges' style: "Tell M. Durand that things are taking a good turn, . . . his presence is necessary. . . . He will have news of me at the Hôtel de Bordeaux, rue de Grenelle, Saint-Honoré, where he will ask for Houvel." Now Houvel was the unknown man who, first of all, had gone to the vine-dresser of Saint-Leu to persuade him to aid the "brigands." Thus d'Aché's route was traced from Biville to Paris and the conclusion drawn that, knowing all the country about Bray, where he owned estates, he had been



chosen to arrange the itinerary of the conspirators and to organise their journeys. He had accompanied them from La Poterie to Feuquières, sometimes going before them, sometimes staying with them in the farms where he had found for them places of refuge.

In default of Georges, then, d'Aché was the next best person to seize, and the First Consul appreciated this fact so keenly that he organised two brigades of picked soldiers and fifty dragoons. But they only served to escort poor sick Mme. d'Aché, her daughter Louise and their friend Caqueray, who were immediately locked up—the last named in the Tower of the Temple, and the two women in the Madelonnettes. The infirm old grandmother remained at Saint-Clair, while Alexandrine wished to follow her mother and sister, and was left quite at liberty. But d'Aché could not be found. Manginot's army had searched the whole country, from Beauvais to Tréport, without success; they had sought him at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where he was said to be hidden, at Saint-Denis-de-Monts, at Saint-Romain, at Rouen. The prefects of Eure and Seine-Inférieure were ordered to set all their police on his track. The result of this campaign was pitiable, and they only succeeded in arresting d'Aché's younger brother, an inoffensive fellow of feeble mind, appropriately named "Placide," who was nicknamed "Tourlour," on account of his lack of wit and his rotundity. His greatest fear was of being mistaken for his brother, which frequently happened. As the elder d'Aché could never be caught, Placide, who loved tranquillity



and hardly ever went away from home, was invariably taken in his stead. It happened again this time, and Manginot seized him, thinking he had done a fine thing. But the first interview undeceived him. However, he sent word of his capture to Réal, who, in his zeal to execute the First Consul's orders, took upon himself to determine that Placide d'Aché was as dangerous a royalist "brigand" as his brother. He ordered the prisoner to be brought under a strong escort to Paris, determining to interrogate him himself. But as soon as he had seen "Tourlour," and had asked him a few questions, including one as to his behaviour during the Terror, and received for answer, "I hid myself with mamma," Réal understood that such a man could not be brought before a tribunal as a rival to Bonaparte. He kept him, however, in prison, so that the name of d'Aché could appear on the gaol-book of the Temple.

In the meantime, on the 9th of March 1804, at the hour when Placide d'Aché was being interrogated, an event occurred, which transformed the drama and hastened its tragic dénouement.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CAPTURE OF GEORGES CADOUDAL

GEORGES had arrived in Paris on September 1, 1803, in a yellow cabriolet driven by the Marquis d'Hozier dressed as a coachman. D'Hozier, who was formerly page to the King and had for several months been established as a livery-stable keeper in the Rue Vieille-du-Temple, conducted Georges to the Hôtel de Bordeaux, kept by the widow Dathy, in the Rue de Grenelle-Saint-Honoré.

The task of finding hiding-places in Paris for the conspirators, had been given to Houvel, called Saint-Vincent, whom we have already seen at Saint-Leu. Houvel's real name was Raoul Gaillard. A perfect type of the incorrigible Chouan, he was a fine-looking man of thirty, fresh-complexioned, with white teeth and a ready smile, and dressed in the prevailing fashion. He was a close companion of d'Aché, and it was even said that they had the same mistress at Rouen. The speciality of Raoul and his brother Armand was attacking coaches which carried government money. Their takings served to pay recruits to the royalist cause. For the past six months Raoul Gaillard had been in Paris looking for safe lodging-places. He was assisted in this delicate task by

Bouvet de Lozier, another of d'Aché's intimate friends, who like him, had served in the navy before the Revolution.

Georges went first to Raoul Gaillard at the Hôtel de Bordeaux, but he left in the evening and slept with Denaud at the "Cloche d'Or," at the corner of the Rue du Bac, and the Rue de Varenne. He was joined there by his faithful servant Louis Picot, who had arrived in Paris the same day. The "Cloche d'Or" was a sort of headquarters for the conspirators; they filled the house, and Denaud was entirely at their service. He was devoted to the cause, and not at all timid. He had placed Georges' cab in the stable of Senator François de Neufchâteau, whose house was next door.

Six weeks before, Bouvet de Lozier had taken, through Mme. Costard de Saint-Léger, his mistress, an isolated house at Chaillot near the Seine. He had put there as concierge, a man named Daniel and his wife, both of whom he knew to be devoted to him. A porch with fourteen steps led to the front hall of the house. This served as dining-room. It was lighted by four windows and paved with squares of black and white marble; a walnut table with eight covers, cane-seated chairs, the door-panels representing the games of children, and striped India muslin curtains completed the decoration of this room. The next room had also four windows, and contained an ottoman and six chairs covered with blue and white Utrecht velvet, two armchairs of brocaded silk, and two mahogany tables with marble tops. Then came

the bedroom with a four-post bed, consoles and mirrors. On the first floor was an apartment of three rooms, and in an adjoining building, a large hall which could be used as an assembly-room. The whole was surrounded by a large garden, closed on the side towards the river-bank by strong double gates.

If we have lingered over this description, it is because it seems to say so much. Who would have imagined that this elegant little house had been rented by Georges to shelter himself and his companions? These men, whose disinterestedness and tenacity we cannot but admire, who for ten years had fought with heroic fortitude for the royal cause, enduring the hardest privations, braving tempests, sleeping on straw and marching at night; these men whose bodies were hardened by exposure and fatigue, retained a purity of mind and sincerity really touching. They never ceased to believe that "the Prince" for whom they fought would one day come and share their danger. It had been so often announced and so often put off that a little mistrust might have been forgiven them, but they had faith, and that inspired them with a thought which seemed quite simple to them but which was really sublime. While they were lodging in holes, living on a pittance parsimoniously taken from the party's funds, they kept a comfortable and secure retreat ready, where "their prince"—who was never to come—could wait at his ease, until at the price of their lives, they had assured the success of his cause. If the history of our bloody feuds has always an epic quality, it is because it abounds in examples of blind

devotion, so impossible nowadays that they seem to us improbable exaggerations.

After six days at the "Cloche d'Or," Georges took possession of the house at Chaillot, but he did not stay there long, for about the 25th of September he was at 21 Rue Carême-Prenant in the Faubourg du Temple. Hozier had rented an entresol there, and had employed a man called Spain, who had an aptitude for this sort of work, to make a secret place in it. Spain, under pretence of indispensable repairs, had shut himself up with his tools in the apartment, and had made a cleverly-concealed trap-door, by means of which, in case of alarm, the tenants could descend to the ground floor and go out by an unoccupied shop whose door opened under the porch of the house. Spain took a sort of pride in his strange talent; he was very proud of a hiding-place he had made in the lodging of a friend, the tailor Michelot, in the Rue de Bussy, which Michelot himself did not suspect. The tailor was obliged to be absent often, and four of the conspirators had successively lodged there. When he was away his lodgers "limbered up" in this apartment, but as soon as they heard his step on the stairs, they reentered their cell, and the worthy Michelot, who vaguely surmised that there was some mystery about his house, only solved the enigma when he was cited to appear before the tribunal as an accomplice in the royalist plot of which he had never even heard the name.

Georges started for his first journey to Biville from the Rue Carême-Prenant. On January 23d he re-



turned finally to Paris, bringing with him Pichegru, Jules de Polignac and the Marquis de Rivière, whom he had gone to the farm of La Poterie to receive. He lodged Pichegru with an employé of the finance department, named Verdet, who had given the Chouans the second floor of his house in the Rue du Puits-de-l'Hermite. They stayed there three days. On the 27th, Georges took the general to the house at Chaillot "where they only slept a few nights." At the very moment that they went there Querelle signed his first declarations before Réal.

It is not necessary to follow the movements of Pichegru, nor to relate his interviews with Moreau. The organisation of the plot is what interests us, by reason of the part taken in it by d'Aché. No one has ever explained what might have resulted politically from the combination of Moreau's embittered ambition, the insouciance of Pichegru, and the fanatical ardour of Georges. Of this ill-assorted trio the latter alone had decided on action, although he was handicapped by the obstinacy of the princes in refusing to come to the fore until the throne was reestablished. He told the truth when he affirmed before the judges, later on, that he had only come to France to attempt a restoration, the means for which were never decided on, for they had not agreed on the manner in which they should act towards Bonaparte. A strange plan had at first been suggested. The Comte d'Artois, at the head of a band of royalists equal in number to the Consul's escort, was to meet him on the road to Malmaison, and provoke him to

single combat, but the presence of the Prince was necessary for this revival of the Combat of Thirty, and as he refused to appear, this project of rather antiquated chivalry had to be abandoned. Their next idea was to kidnap Bonaparte. Some determined men—as all of Georges' companions were—undertook to get into the park at Malmaison at night, seize Bonaparte and throw him into a carriage which thirty Chouans, dressed as dragoons, would escort as far as the coast. They actually began to put this theatrical “coup” into execution. Mention is made of it in the Memoirs of the valet Constant, and certain details of the investigation confirm these assertions. Raoul Gaillard, who still lived at the Hôtel de Bordeaux, and entertained his friends Denis Lamotte, the vine-dresser of Saint-Leu and Massignon, farmer of Saint-Lubin there, had discovered that Massignon leased some land from Macheret, the First Consul's coachman, and had determined at all hazards to make this man's acquaintance. He even had the audacity to show himself at the Château of Saint-Cloud in the hope of meeting him. Besides this, Genty, a tailor in the Palais-Royal, had delivered four chasseur uniforms, ordered by Raoul Gaillard, and Debausseaux, a tailor at Aumale, during one of their journeys had measured some of Monnier's guests for cloaks and breeches of green cloth, which only needed metal buttons to be transformed into dragoon uniforms.

Querelle's denunciations put a stop to all these preparations. Nothing remained but to run to earth again. A great many of the conspirators succeeded

in doing this, but all were not so fortunate. The first one seized by Réal's men was Louis Picot, Georges' servant. He was a coarse, rough man, entirely devoted to his master, under whose orders he had served in the Veudée. He was taken to the Prefecture and promised immediate liberty in exchange for one word that would put the police on the track of Georges. He was offered 1,500 louis d'or, which they took care to count out before him, and on his refusal to betray his master, Réal had him put to the torture. Bertrand, the concierge of the dépôt, undertook the task. The unfortunate Picot's fingers were crushed by means of an old gun and a screw-driver, his feet were burned in the presence of the officers of the guard. He revealed nothing. "He has borne everything with criminal resignation," the judge-inquisitor, Thuriot, wrote to Réal; "he is a fanatic, hardened by crime. I have now left him to solitude and suffering; I will begin again to-morrow; he knows where Georges is hidden and must be made to reveal it."

The next day the torture was continued, and this time agony wrung the address of the Chaillot house from Picot. They hastened there—only to find it empty. But the day had not been wasted, for the police, on an anonymous accusation, had seized Bouvet de Lozier as he was entering the house of his mistress, Mme. de Saint-Léger, in the Rue Saint-Sauveur. He was interrogated and denied everything. Thrown into the Temple, he hanged himself in the night, by tying his necktie to the bars of his cell. A

gaoler hearing his death-rattle, opened the door and took him down ; but Bouvet, three-quarters dead, as soon as they had brought him to, was seized with convulsive tremblings, and in his delirium he spoke.

This attempted suicide, to tell the truth, was only half believed in, and many people, having heard of the things that were done in the Temple and the Prefecture, believed that Bouvet had been assisted in his strangling, just as they had put Picot's feet to the fire. What gave colour to these suspicions was the fact that Bouvet's hands "were horribly swollen" when he appeared before Réal the next day, and also the strange form of the declaration which he was reputed to have dictated at midnight, just as he was restored to life. "A man who comes from the gates of the tomb, still covered with the shadows of death, demands vengeance on those who, by their perfidy," etc. Many were agreed in thinking that that was not the style of a suicide, with the death-rattle still in his throat, but that Réal's agents must have lent their eloquence to this half-dead creature.

However it may have been, the government now knew enough to order the most rigorous measures to be taken against the "last royalists." Bouvet had, like Picot, only been able to mention the house at Chaillot, and the lodging in the Rue Carême-Prenant, and Georges' retreat was still undiscovered. The revelations that fear or torture had drawn from his associates only served to make the figure of this extraordinary man loom greater, by showing the power of his ascendancy over his companions, and the mys-



tery that surrounded all his actions. A legend grew around his name, and the communications published by *Le Moniteur*, contributed not a little towards making him a sort of fantastic personage, whom one expected to see arise suddenly, and by one grand theatrical stroke put an end to the Revolution.

Paris lived in a fever of excitement during the first days of March, 1804, anxiously following this duel to the death, between the First Consul and this phantom-man who, shut up in the town and constantly seen about, still remained uncaught. The barriers were closed as in the darkest days of the Terror. Patrols, detectives and gendarmes held all the streets; the soldiers of the garrison had departed, with loaded arms, to the boulevards outside the walls. White placards announced that "Those who concealed the brigands would be classed with the brigands themselves"; the penalty of death attached to any one who should shelter one of them, even for twenty-four hours, without denouncing him to the police. The description of Georges and his accomplices was inserted in all the papers, distributed in leaflets, and posted on the walls. Their last domicile was mentioned, as well as anything that could help to identify them. The clerks at the barriers were ordered to search barrels, washerwomen's carts, baskets, and, as the cemeteries were outside the walls, to look carefully into all the hearses that carried the dead to them.

On leaving Chaillot, Georges had returned to Verdet, in the Rue du Puits-de-l'Hermite. As he did



not go out and his friends dared not come to see him, Mme. Verdet had instituted herself commissioner for the conspiracy.

One evening she did not return. Armed with a letter for Bouvet de Lozier, she had arrived at the Rue Saint-Sauveur just as they were taking him to the Temple, and had been arrested with him. Thus the circle was narrowing around Georges. He was obliged to leave the Rue du Puits-de-l'Hermite in haste, for fear that torture would wring the secret of his asylum from Mme. Verdet. But where could he go? The house at Chaillot, the Hôtel of the Cloche d'Or, the Rue Carême-Prenant were now known to the police. Charles d'Hozier, on being consulted, showed him a retreat that he had kept for himself, which had been arranged for him by Mlle. Hisay, a poor deformed girl, who served the conspirators with tireless zeal, taking all sorts of disguises and vying in address and activity with Réal's men. She had rented from a fruitseller named Lemoine, a little shop with a room above it, intending "to use it for some of her acquaintances."

It was there that she conducted Georges on the night of February 17. The next day two of his officers, Burban and Joyaut, joined him there, and all three lived at the woman Lemoine's for twenty days. They occupied the room above, leaving the shop untenanted save by Mlle. Hisay and a little girl of Lemoine's, who kept watch there. At night both of them went up to the room, and slept there, separated by a curtain from the beds occupied by Georges and

his accomplices. The fruiterer and her daughter were entirely ignorant of the standing of their guests, Mlle. Hisay having introduced them as three shopkeepers who were unfortunately obliged to hide from their creditors.

This incognito occasioned some rather amusing incidents. One day Mme. Lemoine, on returning from market where the neighbours had been discussing the plot that was agitating all Paris, said to her tenants, "Goodness me! You don't know about it? Why, they say that that miserable Georges would like to destroy us all; if I knew where he was, I'd soon have him caught."

Another time the little girl brought news that Georges had left Paris disguised as an aide-de-camp of the First Consul. Some days later, when Georges asked her what the latest news was, she answered, "They say the rascal has escaped in a coffin."

"I should like to go out the same way," hinted Burban.

However, the police had lost track of the conspirator. It was generally supposed that he had passed the fortifications, when on the 8th of March, Petit, who had known L ridant, one of the Chouans, for a long time, saw him talking with a woman on the Boulevard Saint-Antoine. He followed him, and a little further off, saw him go up to a man who struck him as bearing a great likeness to Joyaut, whose description had been posted on all the walls.

It was indeed Joyaut, who had left Mme. Lemoine's for the purpose of looking for a lodging for

Georges where he would be less at the mercy of chance than in the fruitseller's attic. L ridant told him that the house of a perfumer named Caron, in the Rue Four-Saint-Germain, was the safest retreat in Paris. For some years Caron, a militant royalist, had sheltered distressed Chouans, in the face of the police. He had hidden Hyde de Neuville for several weeks; his house was well provided with secret places, and for extreme cases he had made a place in his sign-post overhanging the street, where a man could lie *perdu* at ease, while the house was being searched. L ridant had obtained Caron's consent, and it was agreed that L ridant should come in a cab at seven o'clock the next evening to take Georges from Sainte-Genevi ve to the Rue du Four.

When he had seen the termination of the interview of which his detective's instinct showed him the importance, Petit, who had remained at a distance, followed Joyaut, and did not lose sight of him till he arrived at the Place Maubert. Suspecting that Georges was in the neighbourhood he posted policemen at the Place du Panth on, and at the narrow streets leading to it; then he returned to watch L ridant, who lodged with a young man called Goujon, in the cul-de-sac of the Corderie, behind the old Jacobins Club. The next day, March 9th, Petit learned through his spies that Goujon had hired out a cab, No. 53, for the entire day. He hastened to the Prefecture and informed his colleague, Destavigny, who, with a party of inspectors took up his position on the Place Maubert. If, as Petit supposed, Georges was hidden

near there, if the cab was intended for him, it would be obliged to cross the place where the principal streets of the quarter converged. The order was given to let it pass if it contained only one person, but to follow it with most extreme care.

The night had arrived, and nothing had happened to confirm the hypotheses of Petit, when, a little before seven o'clock, a cab appeared on the Place, coming from the Rue Galande. Only one man was on it, holding the reins. The spies in different costumes, who hung about the fountain, recognised him as Léri-dant. The cab was numbered 53, and had only the lantern at the left alight. It went slowly up the steep Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Genève; the police, hugging the walls, followed it far off. Petit, the Inspector Caniolle, and the officer of the peace, Des-tavigny, kept nearer to it, expecting to see it stop before one of the houses in the street, when they would only have to take Georges on the threshold. But to their great disappointment the cab turned to the right, into the narrow Rue des Amandiers, and stopped at a porte cochère near the old Collège des Grassins. As the lantern shed a very brilliant light, the three detectives concealed themselves in the lanes near by. They saw Léri-dant descend from the cab. He went through a door, came out, went in again and stayed for a quarter of an hour. Then he turned his horse round, and got up on the seat again.

The cab turned again into the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Genève, and went slowly down it; it went across the Place Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, following the

houses. Caniolle walked behind it, Petit and Destavigny followed at a distance. Just as the carriage arrived at the corner of the Rue des Sept-Voies, four individuals came out from the shadow. One of them seized the apron, and helping himself up by the step, flung himself into the cab, which had not stopped, and went off at full speed. . . .

The police had recognised Georges, disguised as a market-porter. Caniolle, who was nearest, rushed forward; the three men who had remained on the spot, and who were no other than Joyaut, Burban and Raoul Gaillard, tried to stop him. Caniolle threw them off, and chased the cab which had disappeared in the Rue Saint-Etienne-des-Grès. He caught up to it, just as it was entering the Passage des Jacobins. Seizing the springs, he was carried along with it. The two officers of the peace, less agile, followed crying, "Stop! Stop!"

Georges, seated on the right of L  ridant, who held the reins, had turned to the back of the carriage and tried to follow the fortunes of the pursuit through the glass. The moment that he had jumped into the carriage, he had seen the detectives, and said to L  ridant: "Whip him, whip him hard!"

"To go where?" asked the other.

"I do not know, but we must fly!"

And the horse, tingling with blows, galloped off.

At the end of the Passage des Jacobins, which at a sharp angle ended in the Rue de la Harpe, L  ridant was obliged to slow up in order to turn on the Place Saint-Michel, and not miss the entrance to the Rue



des Fossés-Monsieur-le-Prince. He turned towards the Rue du Four, hoping, thanks to the steepness of the Rue des Fossés, to distance the detectives and arrive at Caron's before they caught up with the carriage.

From where he was Georges could not, through the little window, see Caniolle crouched behind the hood. But he saw others running with all their might. Destavigny and Petit had indeed continued the pursuit, and their cries brought out all the spies posted in the quarter. Just as Lérissant wildly dashed into the Rue des Fossés, a whole pack of policemen rushed upon him.

At the approach of this whirlwind the frightened passers-by shrank into the shelter of the doorways. Their minds were so haunted by one idea that at the sight of this cab flying past in the dark with the noise of whips, shouts, oaths, and the resonant clang of the horse's hoofs on the pavement, a single cry broke forth, "Georges! Georges! it is Georges!" Anxious faces appeared at the windows, and from every door people came out, who began to run without knowing it, drawn along as by a waterspout. Did Georges see in this a last hope of safety? Did he believe he could escape in the crowd? However that may be, at the top of the Rue Voltaire he jumped out into the street. Caniolle, at the same moment, left the back of the cab—which Petit, and another policeman called Buffet, had at last succeeded in outrunning,—threw himself on the reins, and allowing himself to be dragged along, mastered the horse, which

stopped, exhausted. Buffet took one step towards Georges, who stretched him dead with a pistol shot; with a second ball the Chouan rid himself, for a moment at least, of Caniolle. He still thought, probably, that he could hide himself in the crowd; and perhaps he would have succeeded, for Destavigny, who had run up, "saw him before him, standing with all the tranquillity of a man who has nothing to fear, and three or four people near him appeared not to be thinking more about Georges than anything else." He was going to turn the corner of the Rue de l'Observance when Caniolle, who was only wounded, struck him with his club. In an instant Georges was surrounded, thrown down, searched and bound. The next morning more than forty individuals, among them several women, made themselves known to the judge as being each "the principal author" of the arrest of the "brigand" chief.

By way of the Carrefour de la Comédie, the Rues des Fossés Saint-Germain and Dauphine, Georges, tied with cords, was taken to the Prefecture. A growing mob escorted him, more out of curiosity than anger, and one can imagine the excitement at police headquarters when they heard far off on the Quai des Orfèvres, the increasing tumult announcing the event, and when suddenly, from the corps de garde in the salons of the Prefect Dubois the news came, "Georges is taken!"

A minute later the vanquished outlaw was pushed into the office of Dubois, who was still at dinner. In spite of his bonds he still showed so much pride and

coolness that the all-powerful functionary was almost afraid of him. Desmaret, who was present, could not himself escape this feeling.

“Georges, whom I saw for the first time,” he said, “had always been to me a sort of Old Man of the Mountain, sending his assassins far and near, against the powers. I found, on the contrary, an open face, bright eyes, fresh complexion, and a look firm but gentle, as was also his voice. Although stout, his movements and manner were easy; his head quite round, with short curly hair, no whiskers, and nothing to indicate the chief of a mortal conspiracy, who had long dominated the *landes* of Brittany. I was present when Comte Dubois, the prefect of police, questioned him. His ease amidst all the hubbub, his answers, firm, frank, cautious and couched in well-chosen language, contrasted greatly with my ideas about him.

“Indeed his first replies showed a disconcerting calm. One may be quoted. When Dubois, not knowing where to begin, rather foolishly reproached him with the death of Buffet, ‘the father of a family,’ Georges smilingly gave him this advice:—‘Next time, then, have me arrested by bachelors.’”

His courageous pride did not fail him either in the interrogations he had to submit to, or before the court of justice. His replies to the President are superb in disdain and abnegation. He assumed all responsibility for the plot, and denied knowledge of any of his friends. He carried his generosity so far as to behave with courteous dignity even to those who had be-

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trayed him ; he even tried to excuse the indifference of the princes whose selfish inertia had been his ruin. He remained great until he reached the scaffold ; eleven faithful Chouans died with him, among the number being Louis Picot, Joyaut and Burban, whose names have appeared in this story.

Thus ended the conspiracy. Bonaparte came out of it emperor. Fouché, minister of police, and his assistants were not going to be useless, for if in the eyes of the public, Georges' death seemed the climax, it was in reality but one incident in a desperate struggle. The depths sounded by the investigation had revealed the existence of an incurable evil. The whole west of France was cankered with Chouannerie. From Rouen to Nantes, from Cherbourg to Poitiers, thousands of peasants, bourgeois and country gentlemen remained faithful to the old order, and if they were not all willing to take up arms in its cause, they could at least do much to upset the equilibrium of the new government. And could not another try to do what Georges Cadoudal had attempted ? If some one with more influence over the princes than he possessed should persuade one of them to cross the Channel, what would the glory of the parvenu count for, balanced against the ancient prestige of the name of Bourbon, magnified and as it were sanctified by the tragedies of the Revolution ? This fear haunted Bonaparte ; the knowledge that in France these Bourbons, exiled, without soldiers or money, were still more the masters than he, exasperated him. He felt that he was in their home, and their nonchalance,



contrasted with his incessant agitation, indicated both insolence and disdain.

The police, as a matter of fact, had unearthed only a few of the conspirators. Many who, like Raoul Gaillard, had played an important part in the plot, had succeeded in escaping all pursuit; they were evidently the cleverest, therefore the most dangerous, and among them might be found a man ambitious of succeeding Cadoudal. The capture to which Fouché and Réal attached the most importance was that of d'Aché, whose presence at Biville and Saint-Leu had been proved. For three months, in Paris even, wherever the police had worked, they had struck the trail of this same d'Aché, who appeared to have presided over the whole organisation of the plot. Thus, he had been seen at Verdet's in the Rue du Puits-de-l'Hermite, while Georges was there; he had met Raoul Gaillard several times; in making an inventory of the papers of a young lady called Margeot, with whom Pichegru had dined, two rather enigmatical notes had been found, in which d'Aché's name appeared.

Mme. d'Aché and her eldest daughter had been since February in the Madelonnettes prison; the second girl, Alexandrine, had been left at liberty in the hope that in Paris, where she was a stranger, she would be guilty of some imprudence that would deliver her father to the police. She had taken lodgings in the Rue Traversière-Saint-Honoré, at the Hôtel des Treize-Cantons, and Réal had immediately set two spies upon her, but their reports were monotonously



melancholy. "Very well behaved, very quiet—she lives, and is daily with the master and mistress of the hotel, people of mature age. She sees no one, and is spoken of in the highest terms." From this side, also, all hope of catching d'Aché had to be abandoned.

Another way was thought of, and on March 22d the order to open all the gates was given. Fouché foresaw that in their anxiety to leave Paris all of Georges' accomplices who had not been caught would hasten to return to Normandy, and thanks to the watchfulness exercised, a clean sweep might be made of them. The cleverly conceived idea had some result. On the 25th a peasant called Jacques Pluquet of Meriel, near l'Isle-Adam, when working in his field on the border of the wood of La Muette, saw four men in hats pulled down over cotton caps, and with strong knotted clubs, coming towards him. They asked him if they could cross the Oise at Meriel. Pluquet replied that it was easy to do so, "but there were gendarmes to examine all who passed." At that they hesitated. They described themselves as conscript deserters coming from Valenciennes who wished to get back to their homes. Pluquet's account is so picturesque as to be worth quoting :

"I asked them where they belonged; they replied in Alençon. I remarked that they would have trouble in getting there without being arrested. One of them said: 'That is true, for after what had just happened in Paris, everywhere is guarded.' Then, allowing the three others to go on ahead, he said to

me, 'But if they arrest us, what will they do to us?' I replied: 'They will take you back to your corps, from brigade to brigade.' On that he said, 'If they catch us, they will make us do ten thousand leagues.' And he left me to regain his comrades, the youngest of whom might have been twenty-two years old and seemed very sad and tired."

The next morning some people at Auvers found a little log cabin in a wood in which the four men had spent the night. They were seen on the following days, wandering in the forest of l'Isle-Adam. At last, on April 1st they went to the ferryman of Meriel, Eloi Cousin, who was sheltering two gendarmes. While they were begging the ferryman to take them in his boat, the gendarmes appeared, and the men fled. A pistol shot struck one of them, and a second, who stopped to assist his comrade, was also taken. The two others escaped to the woods.

The wounded man was put in a boat and taken to the hospital at Pontoise, where he died the next day. Réal, who was immediately informed of it, immediately sent Querelle, whom he was carefully keeping in prison to use in case of need, and he at once recognised the corpse to be that of Raoul Gaillard, called Houvel, or Saint-Vincent, the friend of d'Aché, the principal advance-agent of Georges. The other prisoner was his brother Armand, who was immediately taken to Paris and thrown into the Temple.

The commune of Meriel had deserved well of the country, and the First Consul showed his satisfaction in a dazzling manner. He expressed a desire to

make the acquaintance of this population so devoted to his person, and on the 8th of April, the sous-prefet of Pontoise presented himself at the Tuileries at the head of all the men of the village. Bonaparte congratulated them personally, and as a more substantial proof of his gratitude, distributed among them a sum of 11,000 francs, found in Raoul Gaillard's belt.

This was certainly a glorious event for the peasants of Meriel, but it had an unexpected result. When they returned the next day they learned that a stranger, "well dressed, well armed and mounted on a fine horse," profiting by their absence, had gone to the village, and, "after many questions addressed to the women and children, had gone to the place where Raoul Gaillard was wounded, trying to find out if they had not found a case, to which he seemed to attach great importance." This incident reminded them that, in the boat that took him to Pontoise, Raoul Gaillard, then dying, had anxiously asked if a razor-case had been found among his things. On receiving a negative reply, "he had appeared to be very much put out, and was heard to murmur that the fortune of the man who would discover this case was made."

The visits of this stranger—since seen, "in the country, on the heights and near the woods,"—his threats of vengeance, and this mysterious case, provided matter for a report that perplexed Réal. Was this not d'Aché? A great hunt was organised in the forest of Carnelle, but it brought no result. Four days later they explored the forest of Montmorency,

where some signs of the "brigands' " occupation were seen, but of d'Aché no trace at all, and in spite of the fierceness that Réal's men, incited by the promise of large rewards, brought to this chase of the Chouans, after weeks and months of research, of enquiries, tricks, false trails followed, and traps uselessly laid, it had to be admitted that the police had lost the scent, and that Georges' clever accomplice had long since disappeared.

## CHAPTER III

### THE COMBRAYS

AT the period of our story there existed in the department of the Eure, on the left bank of the Seine, beyond Gaillon, a large old manor-house, backed by the hill that extended as far as Andelys; it was called the Château de Tournebut. Although its peaked roofs could be seen from the river above a thicket of low trees, Tournebut was off the main route of travel, whether by land or water, from Rouen to Paris. Some fairly large woods separated it from the high-road which runs from Gaillon to Saint-Cyr-de-Vaudreuil, while the barges usually touched at the hamlet of Roule, where hacks were hired to take passengers and goods to the ferry of Muids, thereby saving them the long détour made by the Seine. Tournebut was thus isolated between these two much-travelled roads. Its principal façade, facing east, towards the river, consisted of two heavy turrets, one against the other, built of brick and stone in the style of Louis XIII, with great slate roofs and high dormer windows. After these came a lower and more modern building, ending with the chapel. In front of the château was an old square bastion forming a terrace, whose mossy walls were bathed by the waters of a large stagnant marsh. The west front which was plainer,



was separated by only a few feet of level ground from the abrupt, wooded hill by which Tournebut was sheltered. A wall with several doors opening on the woods enclosed the château, the farm and the lower part of the park, and a wide morass, stretching from the foot of the terrace to the Seine, rendered access impossible from that side.

By the marriage of Geneviève de Bois-l'Évêque, Lady of Tournebut, this mansion had passed to the family of Marillac, early in the seventeenth century. The Marshal Louis de Marillac—uncle of Mme. Legras, collaborator of St. Vincent de Paul—had owned it from 1613 to 1631, and tradition asserted that during his struggle against Cardinal Richelieu he had established there a plant for counterfeiting money. To him was due the construction of the brick wing which remained unfinished, his condemnation to death for peculation having put a stop to the embellishments he had intended to make.

There are very few châteaux left in France like this romantic manor of a dead and gone past, whose stones have endured all the crises of our history, and to which each century has added a tower, or a legend. Tournebut, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was a perfect type of these old dwellings, where there were so many great halls and so few living rooms, and whose high slate roofs covered intricacies of framework forming lofts vast as cathedrals. It was said that its thick walls were pierced by secret passages and contained hiding-places that Louis de Marillac had formerly used.

In 1804 Tournebut was inhabited by the Marquise de Combray, born Geneviève de Brunelles, daughter of a President of the Cour des Comptes of Normandy. Her husband, Jean-Louis-Armand-Emanuel Hélié de Combray, had died in 1784, leaving her with two sons and two daughters, and a great deal of property in the environs of Falaise, in the parishes of Donnay, Combray, Bonnœil and other places. Madame de Combray had inherited Tournebut from her mother, Madeleine Hubert, herself a daughter of a councillor in the Parliament of Normandy. Besides the château and the farm, which were surrounded by a park well-wooded with old trees, the domain included the woods that covered the hillside, at the extremity of which was an old tower, formerly a wind-mill, built over deep quarries, and called the "Tower of the Burned Mill," or "The Hermitage." It figures in the ancient plans of the country under the latter name, which it owes to the memory of an old hermit who lived in the quarries for many years and died there towards the close of the reign of Louis XV, leaving a great local reputation for holiness.

Mme. de Combray was of a "haughty and imperious nature; her soul was strong and full of energy; she knew how to brave danger and public opinion; the boldest projects did not frighten her, and her ambition was unbounded." Such is the picture that one of her most irreconcilable enemies has drawn of her, and we shall see that the principal traits were faithfully described. But to complete the resemblance

one must first of all plead an extenuating circumstance: Madame de Combray was a fanatical royalist. Even that, however, would not make her story intelligible, if one did not make allowance for the Calvary that the faithful royalists travelled through so many years, each station of which was marked by disillusion and failures. Since the war on the nobles had begun in 1789, all their efforts at resistance, disdainful at first, stubborn later on, blundering always, had been pitifully abortive. Their rebuffs could no longer be counted, and there was some justification in that for the scornful hatred on the part of the new order towards a caste which for so many centuries had believed themselves to be possessed of all the talents. Many of them, it is true, had resigned themselves to defeat, but the *Intransigents* continued to struggle obstinately; and to say truth, this tenacious attachment to the ghost of monarchy was not without grandeur.

From the very beginning of the Revolution the Marquise de Combray had numbered herself among the unchangeable royalists. Her husband, a timorous and quiet man, who employed in reading the hours that he did not consecrate to sleep, had long since abandoned to her the direction of the household and the management of his fortune. Widowhood had but strengthened the authority of the Marquise, who reigned over a little world of small farmers, peasants and servants, more timid, perhaps, than devoted.

She exacted complete obedience from her children. The eldest son, called the Chevalier de Bonnœil, after

a property near the Château of Donnay, in the environs of Falaise, supported the maternal yoke patiently; he was an officer in the Royal Dragoons at the time of the Revolution. His younger brother, Timoléon de Combray, was of a less docile nature. On leaving the military school, as his father was just dead he solicited from M. de Vergennes a mission in an uncivilised country and set sail for Morocco. Timoléon was a liberal-minded man, of high intellectual culture, and a philosophical scepticism that fitted ill with the Marquise's authoritative temper; although a devoted and respectful man, it was to get away from his mother's tutelage that he expatriated himself. "Our diversity of opinion," he said later on, "has kept me from spending two consecutive months with her in seventeen years." From Morocco he went to Algiers and thence to Tunis and Egypt. He was about to penetrate to Tartary when he heard of the outbreak of the Revolution; and immediately started for France where he arrived at the beginning of 1791.

Of Mme. de Combray's two daughters the eldest had married, in 1787, at the age of twenty-two, Jacques-Philippe-Henri d'Houel; the youngest Caroline-Madeleine-Louise-Geneviève, was born in 1773, and consequently was only eleven years old when her father died. This child is the heroine of the drama we are about to relate.

In August, 1791, Mme. de Combray inscribed herself and her two sons on the list of the hostages of Louis XVI which the journalist Durosay had con-



ceived. It was a courageous act, for it was easy to foresee that the six hundred and eleven names on "this golden book of fidelity," would soon all be suspected. While hope remained for the monarchy the two brothers struggled bravely. Timoléon stayed near the King till August 10, and only went to England after he had taken part in the defence of the Tuileries; Bonnœil had emigrated the preceding year, and served in the army of the Princes. Mme. de Combray, left alone with her two daughters—the husband of the elder had also emigrated,—left Tournebut in 1793, and settled in Rouen, where, although she owned much real estate in the town, she rented in the Rue de Valasse, Faubourg Bouvreuil, "an isolated, unnumbered house, with an entrance towards the country." She gave her desire to finish the education of her younger daughter who was entering her twentieth year as a reason for her retreat.

Caroline de Combray was very small,—“as large as a dog sitting,” they said,—but charming; her complexion was delicately pure, her black hair of extraordinary length and abundance. She was loving and sensible, very romantic, full of frankness and vivacity; the great attraction of her small person was the result of a piquant combination of energy and gentleness. She had been brought up in the convent of the Nouvelles Catholiques de Caen, where she stayed six years, receiving lessons from “masters of all sorts of accomplishments, and of different languages.” She was a musician and played the harp, and as soon as they were settled in Rouen her mother engaged



Boiëldieu as her accompanist, "to whom she long paid six silver francs per lesson," a sum that seemed fabulous in that period of paper-money, and territorial mandates.

Madame de Combray, besides, was much straightened. As both her sons had emigrated, all the property that they inherited from their father was sequestered. Of the income of 50,000 francs possessed by the family before the Revolution, scarcely fifty remained at her disposal, and she had been obliged to borrow to sustain the heavy expenses of her house in Rouen.

Besides her two daughters and the servants, she housed half a dozen nuns and two or three Chartreux, among them a recusant friar called Lemer cier, who soon gained great influence in the household. By reason of his refractoriness Père Lemer cier was doomed, if discovered, to death, or at least to deportation, and it will be understood that he sympathised but feebly with the Revolution that consigned him, against his will, to martyrdom. He called down the vengeance of heaven on the miscreants, and not daring to show himself, with unquenchable ardour preached the holy crusade to the women who surrounded him.

Mme. de Combray's royalist enthusiasm did not need this inspiration; a wise man would have counselled resignation, or at least patience, but unhappily, she was surrounded only by those whose fanaticism encouraged and excused her own. Enthusiastic frenzy had become the habitual state of these people,

whose overheated imaginations were nourished on legendary tales, and foolish hopes of imminent reprisals. They welcomed with unfailing credulity the wildest prophecies, announcing terrible impending massacres, to which the miraculous return of the Bourbon lilies would put an end, and as illusions of this kind are strengthened by their own deceptions, the house in the Rue de Valasse soon heard mysterious voices, and became the scene "of celestial apparitions," which, on the invitation of Père Lemercier predicted the approaching destruction of the blues and the restoration of the monarchy.

On a certain day in the summer of 1795, a stranger presented himself to Père Lemercier, armed with a password, and a very warm recommendation from a refractory priest, who was in hiding at Caen. He was a Chouan chief, bearing the name and title of General Lebreton; of medium stature, with red hair and beard, and cold steel-coloured eyes. Introduced to Mme. de Combray by Lemercier, he admitted that his real name was Louis Acquet d'Hauteporte, Chevalier de Férolles. He had come to Rouen, he said, to transmit the orders of the Princes to Mallet de Crécy, who commanded for the King in Upper Normandy.

We can judge of the welcome the Chevalier received. Mme. de Combray, her daughters, the nuns and the Chartreux friars used all their ingenuity to satisfy the slightest wish of this man, who modestly called himself "the agent general of His Majesty." They arranged a hiding-place for him in the safest part of the house, and Père Lemercier blessed it.

Acquet stayed there part of the day, and in the evening joined in the usual pursuits of the household, and related the story of his adventures by way of entertainment.

According to him, he possessed large estates in the environs of the Sables-d'Olonne, of which place he was a native. An officer in the regiment of Brie infantry before the Revolution, being at Lille in 1791 he had taken advantage of his nearness to the frontier to incite his regiment to insurrection and emigrate to Belgium. He had then put himself at the disposal of the Princes, and had enlisted men for the royal army in Vendée, Poitou and Normandy, helping priests to emigrate, and saving whole villages from the fury of the blues. He named Charette, Frotté and Puisaye as his most intimate friends, and these names recalled the chivalrous times of the wars in the west in which he had taken a glorious part. Sometimes he disappeared for several days, and on his return from these mysterious absences, would let it be known that he had just accomplished some great deed, or brought a dangerous mission to a successful termination. In this way the Chevalier Acquet de Férolles had become the idol of the little group of naïve royalists among whom he had found refuge. He had bravely served *the cause*; he plumed himself on having merited the surname of "*toutou* of the Princes," and in Mme. de Combray's dazzled eyes this was equal to any number of references.

Acquet was in reality an adventurer. If we were to take account here of all the evil deeds he is cred-

ited with, we should be suspected of wantonly blackening the character of this melodramatic figure. A few facts gathered by the Combrays will serve to describe him. As an officer at Lille he was about to be imprisoned as the result of an odious accusation, but deserted and escaped to Belgium, not daring to join the army of the émigrés. He stopped at Mons, then went to the west of France, and became a Chouan, but politics had nothing to do with this act. He associated himself with some bravos of his stripe, and plundered travellers, and levied contributions on the purchasers of national property. In the Eure, where he usually pursued his operations, he assassinated with his own hand two defenceless gamekeepers whom his little band had encountered.

He delighted in taking the funds of the country school-teachers, and to give a colour of royalism to the deed, he would nightly tear down the trees of liberty in the villages in which he operated. Tired at last of "an occupation where there was nothing but blows to receive, and his head to lose," he went to seek his fortune in Rouen; and before he presented himself to Mme. de Combray, had without doubt made enquiries. He knew he would find a rich heiress, whose two brothers, emigrated, would probably never return, and from the first he set to work to flatter the royalist hobby of the mother, and the romantic imagination of the young girl. Père Lemer cier was himself conquered; Acquet, to catch him, pretended the greatest piety and most scrupulous devotion.

A note of Bonnœil's informs us of the way this tragic intrigue ended. "Acquet employed every means of seduction to attain his end. The young girl, fearing to remain long unmarried because of the unhappy times, listened to him, in spite of the many reasons for waiting and for refusing the proposals of a man whose name, country and fortune were unknown to them. The mother's advice was unfortunately not heeded, and she found herself obliged to consent to the marriage, the laws of that period giving the daughters full liberty, and authorising them to shake off the salutary parental yoke."

The dates of certain papers complete the discreet periphrases of Bonnœil. The truth is that Acquet "declared his passion" to Mlle. de Combray and as she, a little doubtful though well-disposed to allow herself to be loved, still hesitated, the Chevalier signed a sort of mystic engagement dated January 1, 1796, where, "in sight of the Holy Church and at the pleasure of God," he pledged himself to marry her on demand. She carefully locked up this precious paper, and a little less than ten months later, the 17th October, the municipal agent of Aubevoye, in which is situated the Château of Tournebut, inscribed the birth of a daughter, born to the citizeness Louise-Charlotte de Combray, "wife of the citizen Louis Acquet." Here, then, is the reason that the Marquise "found herself obliged to consent to the marriage," which did not take place until the following year, mention of it not being made in the registry of Rouen until the date 17th June, 1797.



Acquet had thus attained his wish ; he had seduced Mlle. de Combray to make the marriage inevitable, and this accomplished, under pretext of preventing their sale, he caused the estates of the Combrays situated at Donnay near Falaise, and sequestered by the emigration of Bonnœil, to be conveyed to him. Scarcely was this done when he began to pillage the property, turning everything into money, cutting down woods, and sparing neither thickets nor hedges. "The domain of Donnay became a sort of desert in his hands." Stopped in his depredations by a complaint of his two brothers-in-law he tried to attack the will of the Marquis de Combray, pretending that his wife, a minor at the time of her father's death, had been injured in the division of property. This was to declare open war on the family he had entered, and to compel his wife to espouse his cause he beat her unmercifully. A second daughter was born of this unhappy union, and even the children did not escape the brutality of their father. A note on this subject, written by Mme. Acquet, is of heart-breaking eloquence :

"M. Acquet beat the children cruelly every day ; he ill-treated me also unceasingly : he often chastised them with sticks, which he always used when he made the children read ; they were continually black and blue with the blows they received. He gave me such a severe blow one day that blood gushed from my nose and mouth, and I was unconscious for some moments. . . . He went to get his pistols to blow out my brains, which he would certainly have

done if people had not been present. . . . He was always armed with a dagger."

In January, 1804, Mme. Acquet resolved to escape from this hell. Profiting by her husband's absence in La Vendée she wrote to him that she refused to live with him longer, and hastened to Falaise to ask a shelter from her brother Timoléon, who had lately returned to France. Timoléon, in order to prevent a scandal, persuaded his sister to return to her husband's house. She took this wise advice, but refused to see M. Acquet, who, returning in haste and finding her barricaded in the château, called the justice of the peace of the canton of Harcourt, aided by his clerk and two gendarmes, to witness that his wife refused to receive him. Having, one fine morning, "found her desk forced and all her papers taken," she returned to Falaise, obtained a judgment authorising her to live with her brother, and lodged a petition for separation.

Things were at this point when the trial of Georges Cadoudal was in progress. Acquet, exasperated at the resistance to his projects, swore that he would have signal vengeance on his wife and all the Combrays. They were, unhappily, to give his hatred too good an opportunity of showing itself.

After passing three years in Rouen, Mme. de Combray returned to Tournebut in the spring of 1796, with her royalist passions and illusions as strong as ever. She had declared war on the Revolution, and believed that victory was assured at no distant period. It is a not uncommon effect of political passion to

blind its subjects to the point of believing that their desires and hopes are imminent realities. Mme. de Combray anticipated the return of the King so impatiently that one of her reasons for returning to the château was to prepare apartments for the Princes and their suite in case the debarkation should take place on the coast of Normandy. Once before, in 1792, Gaillon had been designated as a stopping-place for Louis XVI in case he should again make the attempt that had been frustrated at Varennes. The Château de Gaillon was no longer habitable in 1796, but Tournebut, in the opinion of the Marquise, offered the same advantages, being about midway between the coast and Paris. Its isolation also permitted the reception of passing guests without awakening suspicion, while the vast secret rooms where sixty to eighty persons could hide at one time, were well suited for holding secret councils. To make things still safer, Mme. de Combray now acquired a large house, situated about two hundred yards from the walls of Tournebut, and called "Gros-Mesnil" or "Le Petit Château." It was a two-story building with a high slate roof; the court in front was surrounded by huts and offices; a high wall enclosed the property on all sides, and a pathway led from it to one of the doors in the wall surrounding Tournebut.

As soon as she was in possession of the Petit Château, Mme. de Combray had some large secret places constructed in it. For this work she employed a man called Soyer who combined the functions of intendant, maître d'hôtel and valet-de-cham-

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bre at Tournebut. Soyer was born at Combray, one of the Marquise's estates in Lower Normandy, and entered her service in 1791, at the age of sixteen, in the capacity of scullion. He had gone with his mistress to Rouen during the Terror, and since the return to Tournebut she had given the administration of the estate into his hands. In this way he had authority over the domestics at the château, who numbered six, and among whom the chambermaid Querey and the gardener Châtel deserve special mention. Each year, about Easter, Mme. de Combray went to Rouen, where under pretext of purchases to make and rents to collect, she remained a month. Only Soyer and Mlle. Querey accompanied her. Besides her patrimonial house in the Rue Saint-Amand, she had retained the quiet house in the Faubourg Bouvreuil which still served as a refuge for the exiles sought by the police of the Directory, and as a dépôt for the refractories who were sure of finding supplies there and means of rejoining the royalist army. Tournebut itself, admirably situated between Upper and Lower Normandy, became the refuge for all the partisans whom a particularly bold stroke had brought to the attention of the authorities on either bank of the river, totally separated at this time by the slowness and infrequency of communication, and also by the centralisation of the police which prevented direct intercourse between the different departmental authorities. It was in this way that Mme. de Combray, having become from 1796 to 1804, the chief of the party with the advantage of being known as such



only to the party itself, sheltered the most compromised of the chiefs of Norman Chouannerie, those strange heroes whose mad bravery has brought them a legendary fame, and whose names are scarcely to be found, doubtfully spelled, in the accounts of historians.

Among those who sojourned at Tournebut was Charles de Margadel, one of Frotté's officers, who had organised a royalist police even in Paris. Thence he had escaped to deal some blows in the Eure under the orders of Hingant de Saint-Maur, another habitué of Tournebut who was preparing there his astonishing expedition of Pacy-sur-Eure. Besides Margadel and Hingant, Mme. de Combray had oftenest sheltered Armand Gaillard, and his brother Raoul, whose death we have related. Deville, called "Tamerlan"; the brothers Tellier; Le Bienvenu du Buc, one of the officers of Hingant; also another, hidden under the name of Collin, called "Cupidon"; a German bravo named Flierlé, called "Le Marchand," whom we shall meet again, were also her guests, without counting "Sauve-la-Graisse," "Sans-Quartier," "Blondel," "Perce-Pataud"—actors in the drama, without name or history, who were always sure of finding in the "cachettes" of the great château or the Tour de l'Ermitage, refuge and help.

These were compromising tenants, and it is quite easy to imagine what amusements at Tournebut served to fill the leisure of these men so long unaccustomed to regular occupation, and to whom strife and danger had become absolute necessities. Some statistics, rather hard to prove, will furnish hints on



this point. In September, 1800, the two coaches from Caen to Paris were stopped between Evreux and Pacy, at a place called Riquiqui, by two hundred armed brigands, and 48,000 livres belonging to the State taken. Again, in 1800, the coach from Rouen to Pont-Audemer was attacked by twenty Chouans and a part of the funds carried off. In 1801 a coach was robbed near Evreux; some days later the mail from Caen to Paris was plundered by six brigands. On the highroad on the right bank of the Seine attacks on coaches were frequent near Saint-Gervais, d'Authevernes, and the old mill of Mouflaines. It was only a good deal later, when the château of Tournebut was known as an avowed retreat of the Chouans, that it occurred to the authorities that "by its position at an equal distance from the two roads to Paris by Vernon and by Magny-en-Vexin, where the mail had so often been stopped," it might well have served as a centre of operations, and as the authors of these outrages remained undiscovered, they credited them all to Mme. de Combray's inspiration, and this accusation without proof is none too bold. The theft of state funds was a bagatelle to people whom ten years of implacable warfare had rendered blasé about all brigandage. Moreover, it was easily conceivable that the snare laid by Bonaparte for Frotté, who was so popular in Normandy, the summary execution of the General and his six officers, the assassination of the Duc d'Enghien, the death of Georges Cadoudal (almost a god to the Chouans) and of his brave companions, following so many im-

prisonments without trial, acts of police treachery, traps and denunciations paid for and rewarded, had exasperated the vanquished royalists, and envenomed their hatred to the point of believing any expedient justifiable. Such was the state of mind of Mme. de Combray in the middle of 1804, at which date we have stopped the recital of the marital misfortunes of Mme. Acquet de Férolles, and it justified Bonald's saying: "Foolish deeds done by clever men, extravagances uttered by men of intellect, crimes committed by honest people—such is the story of the revolution."

D'Aché had taken refuge at Tournebut. He had left Paris as soon as the gates were opened, and whether he had escaped surveillance more cleverly than the brothers Gaillard, whether he had been able to get immediately to Saint-Germain where he had a refuge, and from there, without risking the passage of a ferry or a bridge, without stopping at any inn, had succeeded in covering in one day the fifteen leagues that separated him from Gaillon, he arrived without mishap at Tournebut where Mme. de Combray immediately shut the door of one of the hiding-places upon him.

Tournebut was familiar ground to d'Aché. He was related to Mme. de Combray, and before the Revolution, when he was on furlough, he had made long visits there while "grandmère Brunelle" was still alive. He had been back since then and had spent there part of the autumn of 1803. There had

been a grand reunion at the château then, to celebrate the marriage of M. du Hasey, proprietor of a château near Gaillon. Du Hasey was aide-de-camp to Guérin de Bruslard, the famous Chouan whom Frotté had designated as his successor to the command of the royal army, and who had only had to disband it. This reunion, which is often mentioned in the reports, by the nature and quality of the guests, was more important than an ordinary wedding-feast.

D'Aché learned at Tournebut of the proclamation of the Empire and the death of Georges. He looked upon it as a death-blow to the royalist hopes; wherever one might turn there was no resource—no chiefs, no money, no men. If many royalists remained in the Orne and the Manche, it was impossible to group them or pay them. The government gained strength and authority daily; at the slightest movement France felt the iron grasp in which she was held tightened around her, and such was the prestige of the extraordinary hero who personified the whole régime, that even those he had vanquished did not disguise their admiration. The King of Spain—a Bourbon—sent him the insignia of the Golden Fleece. The world was fascinated and history shows no example of material and moral power comparable to that of Napoleon when the Holy Father crossed the mountains to recognise and hail him as the instrument of Providence, and anoint him Cæsar in the name of God.

It was, however, just at this time that d'Aché, an exile, concealed in the Château of Tournebut, without

a companion, without a penny, without a counsellor or ally other than the aged woman who gave him refuge, conceived the astonishing idea of struggling against the man before whom all Europe bowed the knee. Looked at in this light it seems madness, but undoubtedly d'Aché's royalist illusions blinded him to the conditions of the duel he was to engage in. But these illusions were common to many people for whom Bonaparte, at the height of his power, was never anything but an audacious criminal whose factitious greatness was at the mercy of a well-directed and fortunate blow.

Fouché's police had not given up hopes of finding the fugitive. They looked for him in Paris, Rouen, Saint-Denis-du-Bosguérard, near Bourghéroulde, where his mother possessed a small estate; they watched closest at Saint-Clair whither his wife and daughters had returned after the execution of Georges. The doors of the Madelonnettes prison had been opened for them and they had been informed that they must remove themselves forty leagues from Paris and the coast; but the poor woman, almost without resources, had not paid attention to this injunction, and they were allowed to remain at Saint-Clair in the hope that d'Aché would tire of his wandering life, and allow himself to be taken at home. As to Placide, as soon as he found himself out of the Temple, and had conducted his sister-in-law and nieces home, he returned to Rouen, where he arrived in mid-July. Scarcely had he been one night in his lodging in the Rue Saint-Patrice, when he received a letter—how, or

from where he could not say—announcing that his brother had gone away so as not to compromise his family again, and that he would not return to France until general peace was proclaimed, hoping then to obtain permission from the government to end his days in the bosom of his family.

D'Aché, however, was living in Tournebut without much mystery. The only precaution he took was to avoid leaving the property, and he had taken the name of "Deslorières," one of the pseudonyms of Georges Cadoudal, "as if he wanted to name himself as his successor." Little by little the servants became accustomed to the presence of this guest of whom Mme. de Combray took such good care "because he had had differences with the government," as she said. Under pretext of repairs undertaken in the church of Aubevoye, the curé of the parish was invited to celebrate mass every Sunday in the chapel of the château, and d'Aché could thus be present at the celebration without showing himself in the village.

Doubtless the days passed slowly for this man accustomed to an active life; he and his old friend dreamt of the return of the King, and Bonnœil, who spent part of the year at Tournebut, read to them a funeral oration of the Duc d'Enghien, a virulent pamphlet that the royalists passed from hand to hand, and of which he had taken a copy. How many times must d'Aché have paced the magnificent avenue of limes, which still exists as the only vestige of the old park. There is a moss-grown stone table on which one loves to fancy this strange man leaning his elbow



while he thought of his "rival," and planned the future according to his royalist illusions as the other in his Olympia, the Tuileries, planned it according to his ambitious caprices.

This existence lasted fifteen months. From the time of his arrival at the end of March, 1804, until the day he left, it does not seem that d'Aché received any visitors, except Mme. Levasseur of Rouen, who, if police reports are to be believed, was simultaneously his mistress and Raoul Gaillard's. The truth is that she was a devoted friend of the royalists—to whom she had rendered great service, and through her d'Aché was kept informed of what happened in Lower Normandy during his seclusion at Tournebut. Since the general pacification, tranquillity was, in appearance at least, established; Chouannerie seemed to be forgotten. But conscription was not much to the taste of the rural classes, and the rigour with which it was applied alienated the population. The number of refractories and deserters augmented at each requisition; protected by the sympathy of the peasants they easily escaped all search; the country people considered them victims rather than rebels, and gave them assistance when they could do so without being seen. There were here all the elements of a new insurrection; to which would be added, if they succeeded in uniting and equipping all these malcontents, the survivors of Frotté's bands, exasperated by the rigours of the new régime, and the ill-treatment of the gendarmes.

The descent of a French prince on the Norman coast would in d'Aché's opinion, group all these mal-

contents. Thoroughly persuaded that to persuade one of them to cross the channel it would suffice to tell M. le Comte d'Artois or one of his sons that his presence was desired by the faithful population in the West, he thought of going himself to England with the invitation. Perhaps they would be able to persuade the King to put himself at the head of the movement, and be the first to land on French soil. This was d'Aché's secret conviction, and in the ardour of his credulous enthusiasm he was certain that on the announcement, Napoleon's Empire would crumble of itself, without the necessity of a single blow.

Such was the eternal subject of conversation between Mme. de Combray and her guest, varied by interminable parties of cards of tric-trac. In their feverish idleness, isolated from the rest of the world, ignorant of new ideas and new manners, they shut themselves up with their illusions, which took on the colour of reality. And while the exile studied the part of the coast where, followed by an army of volunteers with white plumes, he would go to receive his Majesty, the old Marquise put the last touches to the apartments long ago prepared for the reception of the King and his suite on their way to Paris. And in order to perpetuate the remembrance of this visit, which would be the most glorious page in the history of Tournebut, she had caused the old part of the château, left unfinished by Marillac, to be restored and ornamented.

In July, 1805, after more than a year passed in this solitude, d'Aché judged that the moment to act had

arrived. The Emperor was going to take the field against a new coalition, and the campaign might be unfavourable to him. It only needed a defeat to shake to its foundations the new Empire whose prestige a victorious army alone maintained. It was important to profit by this chance should it arrive. And in order to be within reach of the English cruiser d'Aché had to be near Cotentin; he had many devoted friends in this region and was sure of finding a safe retreat. Mme. de Combray, taking advantage of the fair of Saint-Clair which was held every year in mid-July, near the Château of Donnay, could conduct her guest beyond Falaise without exciting suspicion. They determined to start then, and about July 15, 1805, the Marquise left Tournebut with her son Bonnoeil, in a cabriolet that d'Aché drove, disguised as a postillion.

In this equipage, the man without any resource but his courage, and his royalist faith, whose dream was to change the course of the world's events, started on his campaign; and one is obliged to think, in face of this heroic simplicity, of Cervantes' hero, quitting his house one fine morning, and armed with an old shield and lance, encased in antiquated armour and animated by a sublime but foolish faith, going forth to succour the oppressed, and declare war on Giants.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ADVENTURES OF D'ACHÉ

THE demesne of Donnay, situated about three leagues from Falaise on the road to Harcourt, was one of the estates which Acquet de Férolles had usurped, under pretext of saving them from the Public Treasury and of taking over the management of the property of his brother-in-law, Bonnœil, who was an émigré. Now, the latter had for some time returned to the enjoyment of his civil rights, but Acquet had not restored his possessions. This terrible man, acting in the name of his wife, who was a claimant of the inheritance of the late M. de Combray, had instituted a series of lawsuits against his brother-in-law. He proved to be such a clever tactician, that though Mme. Acquet had for some time been suing for a separation, he managed to live on the Combray estates; fortifying his position by means of a store of quotations drawn, as occasion demanded, from the Common Law of Normandy, the Revolutionary Laws and the Code Napoleon. To deal with these questions in detail would be wearisome and useless. Suffice it to say that at the period at which we have arrived, all that Mme. Acquet had to depend upon was a pension of 2,000 francs which the court had granted to her on August 1, 1804, for her mainte-

nance pending a definite decision. She lived alone at the Hôtel de Combray in the Rue du Trepot at Falaise, a very large house composed of two main buildings, one of which was vacant owing to the absence of Timoléon who had settled in Paris. Mme. de Combray had undertaken to assist with her granddaughters' education, and they had been sent off to a school kept by a Mme. du Saussay at Rouen.

Foreseeing that this state of things could not last forever, Acquet, despite Bonnœil's oft-repeated protests, continued to devastate Donnay, so as to get all he could out of it, cutting down the forests, chopping the elms into faggots, and felling the ancient beeches. The very castle whose façade but lately reached to the end of the stately avenue, suffered from his devastations. It was now nothing but a ruin with swing-doors and a leaking roof. Here Acquet had reserved a garret for himself, abandoning the rest of the house to the ravages of time and the weather. Shut up in this ruin like a wild beast in his lair, he would not permit the slightest infringement of what he called his rights. Mme. de Combray wished to spend the harvest season of 1803 at the château, where the happiest years of her life had been passed, and where all her children had grown up, but Acquet made the bailiff turn her out, and the Marquise took refuge in the village parsonage, which had been sold at the time of the Revolution as national property, and for which she had supplied half the money, when the Commune bought it back, to restore it to its original purpose. Since no priest had yet been appointed she was able



to take up her residence there, to the indignation of her son-in-law, who considered this intrusion as a piece of bravado.

Two years later Mme. de Combray had still no other shelter at Donnay, and it was to this parsonage that she brought d'Aché. They arrived there on the evening of July 17th. A long stay in this conspicuous house, which was always exposed to the hateful espionage of Acquet, was out of the question for the exile. He nevertheless spent a fortnight there, without trying to hide himself, even going so far as to hunt, and receive several visits, among others one from Mme. Acquet, who came from Falaise to see her mother, and thus met d'Aché for the first time. At the beginning of August he quitted Donnay, and Mme. de Combray accompanied him as far as the country château of a neighbour, M. Descroisy, where he passed one night. At break of day he set out on horseback in the direction of Bayeux, Mme. de Combray alone knowing where he went.

In this neighbourhood d'Aché had the choice of several places of refuge. He was closely connected by ties of friendship with the family of Duquesnay de Monfiquet who lived at Mandeville near Trévières. M. de Monfiquet, a thoroughly loyal but quite unimportant nobleman, having emigrated at the outbreak of the Revolution, his estate at Mandeville had been sequestered and his château pillaged and half demolished. Mme. de Monfiquet, a clever and energetic woman, being left with six daughters unprovided for,

took refuge with the d'Achés at Gournay, where she spent the whole period of the Terror. Madame d'Aché even kept Henriette, one of the little girls who was ill-favoured and hunchbacked but remarkably clever, with her for five years.

Monsieur de Monfiquet, returning from abroad in the year VII, and having somewhat reorganised his little estate at Mandeville, lived there in poverty with his family in the hope that brighter days would dawn for them with the return of the monarchy. On all these grounds d'Aché was sure of finding not only a safe retreat but congenial society. The few persons who were acquainted with what passed at Mandeville were convinced that Mlle. Henriette possessed a great influence over the exile, and that she had been his mistress for a long time. According to general opinion he made her his confidant and she helped him like a devoted admirer. In fact she arranged several other hiding-places for him in the neighbourhood of Trévières in case of need ;—one at the mill at Dungy, another with M. de Cantelou at Lingèvres, and a third at a tanner's named La Pérandeère at Bayeux. And to escort him in his flights she secured a man of unparalleled audacity who had been a brigand in the district for ten years, and who had to avenge the death of his two brothers, who had fallen into an ambush and been shot at Bayeux in 1796. People called him David the Intrepid. Having been ten times condemned to death and certain of being shot as soon as he was caught, David had no settled abode. On stormy nights he would embark in a boat which

he steered himself, and, sure of not being overtaken, he would reach England where he used to act as an agent for the emigrants. They say that he was not without influence with the entourage of the Comte d'Artois. When he stayed in France he lodged with an old lady former housekeeper to a Councillor of the Parliament of Normandy, who lived alone in an old house in Bayeux and to whom he had been recommended by Mlle. Henriette de Monfiquet. David did not take up much room. When he arrived he set in motion a contrivance of his own by which two steps of the principal staircase were raised, and slipping into the cavity thus made, he quickly replaced everything. All the gendarmes in Calvados could have gone up and down this staircase without suspecting that a man was hidden in the house, where, however, he was never looked for.

These were the persons and means made use of by d'Aché in his new theatre of operations: a poor hunchbacked girl was his council, and his army was composed of David the Intrepid. He was, moreover, penniless. At the beginning of the autumn Mme. de Combray sent him eight louis by Lanoë, a keeper who had been in her service, and who now occupied a small farm at Glatigny, near to Bretteville-sur-Dives. Lanoë belonged to that rapacious type of peasant whom even a small sum of money never fails to attract. Already he had on two occasions acted as guide to the Baron de Commarque and to Frotté when Mme. de Combray offered them shelter at Donnay. For this he had been summoned before a military

commission and spent nearly two years in prison, but this had no effect. For three francs he would walk ten leagues and if he complained sufficiently of the dangers to which these missions exposed him the sum was doubled and he would go away satisfied. In the middle of August he went to Mandeville to fetch d'Aché to Donnay, where he spent ten days and again passed three weeks at the end of September. He was to have gone there again in December, but at the moment when he was preparing to start Bonnœil suddenly appeared at Mandeville, having come to warn him not to venture there as Mme. de Combray had been accused of a crime and was on the point of being arrested.

It was not without vexation that Acquet saw his mother-in-law settling herself at his very door. Keenly on the lookout for any means of annoying the Marquise, he was struck by the idea that if an incumbent were appointed to the vacant curé of Donnay, he would have to live at the parsonage, half of which belonged to the Commune, and that their being obliged to live in the same house would be a great inconvenience to Mme. de Combray. This prospect charmed Acquet, and as he had several friends in high positions, among them the Baron Darthenay his neighbour at Meslay, who had lately been elected deputy for Calvados, he had small difficulty in getting a priest appointed. A few days afterwards a curé, the Abbé Clérisse, arrived at Donnay, fully determined to carry out the duties of his ministry



faithfully, and very far from foreseeing the tragic fate in store for him.

Mme. de Combray had made herself quite comfortable at the parsonage, which she considered in a manner her own property since she had furnished half the money for its purchase. She now saw herself compelled to surrender a portion of it, which from the very first embittered her against the new arrival. Acquet, for his part, fêted his protégé, and welcoming him cordially put him on his guard against the machinations of the Marquise, whom he represented as an inveterate enemy of the conciliatory government to which France owed the Concordat. The Abbé Clérissé, who, from the construction of the house was obliged to use the rooms in common with Mme. de Combray, was not long in noticing the mysterious behaviour of the occupants. There were conferences conducted in whispers, visitors who arrived at night and left at dawn, secret comings and goings, in short, all the strange doings of a houseful of conspirators, so that the good curé one day took Lanoë aside and recommended him to be prudent, "predicting that he would get himself into serious difficulties if he did not quit the service of the Marquise as soon as possible." Mme. de Combray, in her exasperation, called the Abbé "Concordataire," an epithet which, from her, was equivalent to renegade. She had the imprudence to add that the reign of the "usurper would not last forever, and that the princes would soon return at the head of an English army and restore everything." In her wrath she left the parsonage, making a great com-



motion, and went to beg shelter from her farmer Hébert, who lived in a cottage used as a public house, called La Bijude, where the road from Harcourt met that from Cesny. Acquet was triumphant. The astonished Abbé remained passive; and as ill luck would have it, fell ill and died a few days afterwards. A report was circulated, emanating from the château, that he had died of grief caused by Mme. de Combray. Then people began to talk in whispers about a certain basket of white wine with which she had presented the poor priest. A week later all those who sided with Acquet were convinced that the Marquise had poisoned the Abbé Clérissé, "after having been imprudent enough to take him into her confidence." Feeling ran high in the village. Acquet affected consternation. The authorities, no doubt informed by him, began making investigations when a nephew of the Marquise, M. de Saint Léonard, Mayor of Falaise, who was on very good terms with the Court, came down to hush up the affair and impose silence on the mischief-makers.

This first bout between Acquet de Férolles and the family de Combray resulted in d'Aché's being forbidden the house of his old friend. Feeling herself in the clutches of an enemy who was always on the watch, she did not dare to expose to denunciation a man on whose head the fate of the monarchy rested. D'Aché did not come to La Bijude the whole winter. Mme. de Combray lived there alone with her son Bonnœil and the farmer Hébert. She had the house done up and repainted, but it distressed her to be so

meanly lodged, and she regretted the lofty halls and the quiet of Tournebut. At the beginning of Lent, 1806, she sent Lanoë for the last time to Mandeville to arrange with d'Aché some means of correspondence, and with Bonnœil she again started for Gaillon, determined never again to set foot on her estates in Lower Normandy as long as her son-in-law reigned there, and thoroughly convinced that the fast approaching return of the King would avenge all the humiliations she had lately endured. She had, moreover, quarrelled with her daughter, who had only come to Donnay twice during her mother's stay, and had there displayed only a very moderate appreciation of d'Aché's plans, and had seemed entirely uninterested in the annoyance caused to the Marquise, and her exodus to La Bijude.

If Mme. Acquet de Férolles was really lacking in interest, it was because a great event had occurred in her own life.

Acquet knew that his wife's suit for a separation must inevitably be granted. The ill-treatment she had had to endure was only too well-known, and every one in Falaise took her part. If Acquet lost the case, it would mean the end of the easy life he was leading at Donnay, and he not only wished to gain time but secretly hoped that his wife would commit some indiscretion that would regain for him if not the sympathies of the public, at least her loss of the suit which if won, would ruin him. In order to carry out his Machiavellian schemes, he pretended that he wished to come to an understanding with the Com-

bray family, and he despatched one of his friends to Mme. Acquet to open negotiations. This friend, named Le Chevalier, was a handsome young man of twenty-five, with dark hair, a pale complexion and white teeth. He had languishing eyes, a sympathetic voice and a graceful figure, inexhaustible good-humour, despite his melancholy appearance, and unbounded audacity. As he was the owner of a farm in the Commune of Saint Arnould in the neighbourhood of Exmes, he was called Le Chevalier de Saint-Arnould, which gave him the position of a nobleman. He was moreover related to the nobility.

Less has been written about Le Chevalier than about most of those who were concerned in the troubles in the west. Nevertheless, his adventures deserve more than the few lines, often incorrect, devoted to him by some chroniclers of the revolt of the Chouans. He was a remarkable personality, very romantic, somewhat of an enigma, and one who by a touch of gallantry and scepticism was distinguished from his savage and heroic companions.

Born with a generous temperament and deeply in love with glory, as he said, he was the son of a councillor, hammer-keeper to the corporation of the woods and forests of Vire. A stay of several years in Paris where he took lessons from different masters as much in science as in the arts and foreign languages, had completed his education. He returned to Saint Arnould in 1799, uncertain as to the choice of a career, when a chance meeting with Picot, chief of the Auge division, whose death was described at the

beginning of this story, decided his vocation, and Le Chevalier became a royalist officer, less from conviction than from generous feelings which inclined him towards the cause of the vanquished and oppressed. A pistol shot broke his left arm two or three days after he was enrolled, and he was scarcely cured of this wound when he again took the field and was implicated in the stopping of a coach. Three of his friends were imprisoned, and when he himself was arrested, he succeeded in proving that on the very day of the attack, in the neighbourhood of Evreux, he was on a visit to a senator in Paris who had great friends among the authorities, and the magistrates were compelled to yield before this indisputable alibi. Le Chevalier, nevertheless, appeared before the tribunal which was trying the cases of his companions, and pleaded their cause with the eloquence inspired by the purest and bravest friendship, and when he heard them condemned to death, he begged in a burst of feeling which amazed everybody, to be allowed to share their fate. It was considered a sufficient punishment to send him to prison at Caen, whence he was liberated a few months later, though he had to remain in the town under police surveillance. It was then that the wild romance of his life began.

He possessed an ample fortune. His chivalrous behaviour in the affair at Evreux had gained for him, among the Chouans such renown that without knowing him otherwise than from hearsay, Mme. de Combray travelled across Normandy, as did many other royalist ladies in order to visit the hero in prison and



offer him her services. He had admirers who fawned on him, flatterers who praised him to the skies, and how could this rather hot-headed youth of twenty resist such adulation at that strange epoch when even the wisest lost their balance? At least his folly was generous.

Scarcely out of prison he was seized with pity for the misery of the pardoned Chouans, veritable pariahs, who lived by all sorts of contrivances or were dependent on charity, and he made their care his special charge. He was always followed by a dozen of these parasites, a ragged troop of whom filled the Café Hervieux, where he held his court and which moreover was frequented by teachers of English, mathematics and fencing, whom he had in his pay, and from whom he took lessons when not playing faro.

Le Chevalier had a warm heart, and a purse that was never closed. He was a facile speaker whose eloquence was of a forensic type. His friendships were passionate. While in prison he received news of the death of one of his friends, Gilbert, who had been guillotined at Evreux, and when some one congratulated him on his approaching release he replied: "Ah, my dear comrade! do you think this is a time to congratulate me? Do you know so little of my heart and are you so ignorant of the love I bore Gilbert? The happiness of my life is destroyed forever. Nothing can fill the void in my heart. . . . I have lived, ah! far too long. O divine duties of friendship and honour, how my heart burns to fulfil you! O eternity or annihilation, how sweet will



you seem to me whence once I have fulfilled them !” Such was Le Chevalier’s style and this affection contrasted singularly with the world in which he lived. His comparative wealth, his generosity, and an air of mystery about his life, gave him a certain advantage over the most popular leaders. People knew that he was dreaming of gigantic projects, and his partisans considered him cut out for the accomplishment of great things.

In reality Le Chevalier squandered his patrimony recklessly. The treasury of the party—presided over by an old officer of Frotté’s, Bureau de Placène, who pompously styled himself the Treasurer-General—was empty, and orders came from “high places,” without any one exactly knowing whence they emanated, for the faithful to refill them by pillaging the coffers of the state. The police had little by little relaxed their supervision of Le Chevalier’s conduct, and he took advantage of this to go away for short periods. It was remarked that each of his absences generally coincided with the stopping of a coach—a frequent occurrence in Normandy at this time, and one that was considered as justifiable by the royalists. Seldom did they feel any qualms about these exploits. The driver, and often his escort, were accomplices of the Chouans. A few shots were fired from muskets or pistols to keep up the pretence of a fight. Some of the men opened the chests while others kept watch. The money belonging to the government was divided to the last sou, while that belonging to private individuals was carefully returned to the strong box. A

few hours later the band returned to Caen and the noisy meetings at the Café Hervieux were not even interrupted.

What renders the figure of Le Chevalier especially attractive, despite these mad pranks, which no one of his day considered dishonourable, is the deep private grief which saddened his adventurous life. In 1801, when he was twenty-one years of age, and during his detention at Caen, he had married Lucile Thiboust, a girl somewhat older than himself, whose father had been overseer of an estate. He was obliged to break out of prison to spend a few rare hours with the wife whom he dearly loved, all the more so since his passion was oftenest obliged to expend itself in ardent letters not devoid of literary merit. In prison he learned of the birth of a son born of this union, and a week later, of the death of his adored wife. His grief was terrible, but he was seized with a passionate love for his child, and it is said that from that day forth he cared for no one else. He had lived so fast that at the age of twenty-three he was tired of life ; his only anxiety was for the future of his son, whom he had confided to the care of a good woman named Marie Hamon. He traced out a line of conduct for this babe in swaddling clothes : “ Let him flee corruption, seduction and all shameful and violent passions ; let him be a friend as they were in ancient Greece, a lover as in ancient Gaul.”

In short his exploits, his captivity, his sorrows, his eloquence, his courage, his noble bearing, made Le Chevalier a hero of romance, and this was the man

whom Acquet de Férolles deemed it wise to despatch to his wife. Doubtless he had made his acquaintance through the medium of some of his Chouan comrades. He received him at Donnay, and in order to attach him to himself lent him large sums of money, which Le Chevalier immediately distributed among the crowd of parasites that never left him. Acquet told him of the separation with which his wife threatened him, begging him to use all his eloquence to bring about an amicable settlement.

The poor woman would never have known this peacemaker but for her husband, and we are ignorant of the manner in which he acquitted himself of his mission. She had yielded as much from inexperience as from compulsion, to a man who for five years had made her life a martyrdom. She lived at Falaise in an isolation that accorded ill with her yearning for love and her impressionable nature. The person who now came suddenly into her life corresponded so well with her idea of a hero—he was so handsome, so brave, so generous, he spoke with such gentleness and politeness that Mme. Acquet, to whom these qualities were startling novelties, loved him from the first day with an “ungovernable passion.” She associated herself with his life with an ardour that excluded every other sentiment, and she so wished to stand well with him that, casting aside all prudence, she adopted his adventurous mode of living, mixing with the outcasts who formed the entourage of her lover, and with them frequenting the inns and cafés of Caen. He succeeded in avoiding the surveillance of

the police, and secretly undertook journeys to Paris where he said he had friends in the Emperor's immediate circle. He travelled by those roads in Normandy which were known to all the old Chouans, talking to them of the good times when they made war on the Blues, and not hesitating to say that, whenever he wished, he had only to make a sign and an army would spring up around him. He maintained, moreover, a small troop of determined men who carried his messages and formed his staff.

There is not the slightest doubt that their chief resource lay in carrying off the money of the State which was sent from place to place in public conveyances, and it was this booty that enriched the coffers of the party, the treasurer, Placène, having long since grown indifferent to the source of his supplies. The agreement of certain dates is singularly convincing. Thus, at the beginning of December, 1805, d'Aché was at Mandeville with the Monfiquets, in a state of such penury that, as we have seen, Mme. de Combray sent him eight louis d'or by Lanoë; nevertheless, he was thinking of going to England to fetch back the princes. He would require a considerable sum to prepare for his journey, and to guard against all the contingencies of this somewhat audacious attempt. Mme. Acquet was informed of the situation by her mother whom she came to visit at Donnay, and on the 22d December, 1805, the coach from Rouen to Paris was attacked on the slope of Authernes, at a distance of only three leagues from the Château of Tournebut. The travellers noticed that



one of the brigands, dressed in a military costume, and whom his comrades called The Dragon, was so much thinner and more active than the rest, that he might well have been taken "for a woman dressed as a man." A fresh attack was made at the same place by the same band on the 15th February, 1806; and as before the band disappeared so rapidly, once the blow was struck, that it seemed they must have taken refuge in one of the neighbouring houses. Suspicion fell on the Château de Mussegros, situated about three leagues from Authevernes; but nobody then thought of Tournebut, the owners of which had been absent for seven months. It was only in March that Mme. de Combray returned there, and it was in April that d'Aché, having laid in a good stock of money, decided to cross the channel and convey to the princes the good wishes of their faithful provinces in the west.

D'Aché had not wasted his time during his stay at Mandeville. It was a difficult enterprise in existing circumstances to arrange his crossings with any chance of success. The embarkation was easy enough, and David the Intrepid had undertaken to see to it; but it was especially important to secure a safe return, and a secret landing on the French coast, lined as it was by patrols, watched day and night by custom-house officers, and guarded by sentinels at every point where a boat could approach the shore, offered almost insuperable difficulties. D'Aché selected a little creek at the foot of the rocks of Saint Honorine, scarcely two leagues from Trévières and



David, who knew all the coast guards in the district, bribed one of them to become an accomplice.

It was on a stormy night at the end of April, 1806, that d'Aché put to sea in a boat seventeen feet long, which was steered by David the Intrepid. After tossing about for fifty hours, they landed in England. David immediately stood out to sea again, while d'Aché took the road to London.

One can easily imagine what the feelings of these royalist fanatics must have been when they approached the princes to whom they had devoted so many years of their lives, hunted over France and pursued like malefactors; how they must have anticipated the welcome in London that their devotion merited. They were prepared to be treated like sons by the King, as friends by the princes, as leaders by the emigrants, who were only waiting to return till France was reconquered for them. The deception was cruel. The emigrant world, so easy to dupe on account of its misfortunes, and immeasurable vanity, had fallen a victim to so many false Chouans—spies in disguise and barefaced swindlers, who each brought plans for the restoration, and after obtaining money made off and were never seen again—that distrust at last had taken the place of the unsuspecting confidence of former days. Every Frenchman who arrived in London was considered an adventurer, and as far as we can gather from this closed page of history,—for those, who tried the experiment of a visit to the exiled princes, have respectfully kept silence on the subject of their discomfiture—it ap-

pears that terrible mortifications were in store for the militant royalists who approached the emigrant leaders. D'Aché did not escape disillusionment, and though he did not disclose the incidents of his stay in London, we know that at first he was thrown into prison, and that for two months he could not succeed in obtaining an interview with the Comte d'Artois, much less with the exiled King.

M. de la Chapelle, the most influential man at the little court at Hartwell, sent for him and questioned him about his plans, but was opposed to his being received by the princes, though he put him in communication with King George's ministers, every person who brought news of any plot against Napoleon's government being sure of a welcome and a hearing from the latter.

After three weeks of conferences the expedition which was to support a general rising of the peasants in the West, was postponed till the spring of 1807. A feigned attack on Port-en-Bessin would allow of their surprising the islands of Tahitou and Saint-Marcouf as well as Port-Bail on the western slope of the Cotentin. The destruction of the roads, which protect the lower part of the peninsula, would insure the success of the undertaking by cutting off Cherbourg which, attacked from behind, would easily be carried, resistance being impossible. The invading army, concentrating under the forts of the town, in which they would have a safe retreat, would descend by Carenton on Saint-Lô and Caen to meet the army of peasants and malcontents whose cooperation d'Aché

guaranteed. He undertook to collect twenty thousand men; the English government offered the same number of Russian and Swedish soldiers, and to provide for their transportation to the coast of France. Pending this, d'Aché was given unlimited credit on the banker Nourry at Caen.

His stay in London lasted nearly three months. Towards the end of July an English frigate took him to the fleet where Admiral Saumarez received him with great deference, and equipped a brig with fourteen cannon to convey him to the shore. When, at night, they were within a gunshot of the coast of Saint-Honorine, d'Aché himself made the signals agreed upon, which were quickly answered by the coast guard on shore. An hour afterwards David the Intrepid's boat hailed the English brig, and before daybreak d'Aché was back at Mandeville, sharing with his hosts the joy he felt at the success of his voyage. They began to make plans immediately. It was decided on the spot that the Château de Monfiquet should shelter the King during the first few days after he landed. Eight months were to elapse before the beginning of the campaign, and as money was not lacking this time was sufficient for d'Aché to prepare for operations.

We may as well mention at once that the English Cabinet, while playing on the fanaticism of d'Aché, as they had formerly done on that of Georges Caudoudal and so many others, had not the slightest intention of keeping their promises. Their hatred of Napoleon suggested to them the infamous idea of ex-

citing the naïve royalists of France by raising hopes they never meant to satisfy. They abandoned them once they saw their dupes so deeply implicated that there was no drawing back, caring little if they helped them to the scaffold, desirous only of maintaining agitations in France and of driving them into such desperate straits that some assassin might arise from among them who would rid the world of Bonaparte. Here lies, doubtless, one of the reasons why the exiled princes so obstinately refused to encourage their partisans' attempts. Did they know of the snares laid for these unhappy creatures? Did they not dare to put them on their guard for fear of offending the English government? Was this the rent they paid for Hartwell? The history of the intrigues which played around the claimant to the throne is full of mystery. Those who were mixed up in them, such as Fauche-Bonel or Hyde de Neuville were ruined, and it required the daylight of the Restoration to open the eyes of the persons most interested to the fact that certain professions of devotion had been treacherous.

As far as d'Aché was concerned it seems fairly certain that he did not receive any promise from the princes, and was not even admitted to their presence; the English ministers alone encouraged him to embark on this extraordinary adventure, in which they were fully determined to let him ruin himself. Therefore the "unlimited" credit opened at the banker Nourry's was only a bait: while making the conspirators think they would never want for money,

the credit was limited beforehand to 30,000 francs, a piece of duplicity which enraged even the detectives who, later on, discovered it.

It is not easy to follow d'Aché in the mysterious work upon which he entered: the precautions he took to escape the police have caused him to be lost to posterity as well. Some slight landmarks barely permit our following his trail during the few years which form the climax of his wonderful career.

We find him first of all during the autumn of 1806, at La Bijude, where Mme. de Combray, who had remained at Tournebut had charged Bonnœil and Mme. Acquet to go and receive him. There was some question of providing him with a messenger familiar with the haunts of the Chouans and the dangers connected with the task. To fulfil this duty Mme. Acquet proposed a German named Flierlé whom Le Chevalier recommended. Flierlé had distinguished himself in the revolt of the Chouans; a renowned fighter, he had been mixed up in every plot. He was in Paris at the time of the eighteenth Fructidor; he turned up there again at the moment when Saint-Rejant was preparing his infernal machine; he again spent three months there at the time of Georges' conspiracy. For the last two years, whilst waiting for a fresh engagement, he had lived on a small pension from the royal treasury, and when funds were low, he made one of his more fortunate companions in old days put him up; and thus he roamed from Caen to Falaise, from Mortain to Bayeux or Saint-Lô, even going into Mayenne in his wanderings.



Although he would never have acknowledged it, we may say that he was one of the men usually employed in attacking public vehicles: in fact, he was an adept at it and went by the name of the "Teisch."

Summoned to La Bijude he presented himself there one morning towards the end of October. D'Aché arrived there the same evening while they were at dinner. They talked rather vaguely of the great project, but much of their old Chouan comrades. In spite of his decided German accent Flierlé was inexhaustible on this theme. He and d'Aché slept in the same room, and this intimacy lasted two whole days, at the end of which it was decided that Flierlé should be employed as a messenger at a salary of fifty crowns a month. That same night, Lanoë conducted d'Aché two leagues from La Bijude and left him on the road to Arjentan.

Here is a new landmark: on November 26th, Veyrat, the inspector of police, hastily informed Desmarets that d'Aché, whom they had been seeking for two years, had arrived the night before in Paris, getting out of the coach from Rennes in the company of a man named Durand. The latter, leaving his trunk at the office, spent the night at a house in the Rue Montmartre, whence he departed the next morning for Boulogne. As for d'Aché, wrote Veyrat, he had neither box nor parcel, and disappeared as soon as he got out of the carriage. Search was made in all the furnished lodgings and hotels in the neighbourhood, but without result. Desmarets set all his best men to work, but in vain: d'Aché was not to be found.

He was at Tournebut, where he spent a month. It is probable that a pressing need of money was the cause of this journey to Paris and his visit to Mme. de Combray. By this time d'Aché had exhausted his credit at the banker Nourry's. Believing that this source would never be exhausted, he had drawn on it largely. His disappointment was therefore cruel when he heard that his account was definitely closed. He found himself again without money, and by a coincidence which must be mentioned, the diligence from Paris to Rouen was robbed, during his stay at Tournebut, in November, 1806, at the Mill of Monflaines, about a hundred yards from Authevernes, where the preceding attacks had taken place. The booty was not large this time, and when d'Aché again took the road to Mandeville his resources consisted of six hundred francs.

He was obliged to spend the winter in torturing idleness; there is no indication of his movements till February, 1807. The time fixed for the great events was drawing near, and it was important to make them known. He decided on the plan of a manifesto which was to be widely circulated through the whole province, and would not allow any one to assist in drawing it up. This proclamation, written in the name of the princes, stipulated a general amnesty, the retention of those in authority, a reduction of taxation, and the abolition of conscription. Lanoë, summoned to Mandeville, received ten louis and the manuscript of the manifesto, with the order to get it printed as secretly as possible. The crafty

Norman promised, slipped the paper into the lining of his coat, and after a fruitless—and probably very feeble—attempt on a printer's apprentice at Falaise, returned it to Flierlé, with many admonitions to be prudent, but only refunded five louis. Flierlé first applied to a bookseller in the Froide Rue at Caen. The latter, as soon as he found out what it contained, refused his assistance.

An incident now occurred, the importance of which it is difficult to discover, but which seems to have been great, to judge from the mystery in which it is shrouded. Whether he had received some urgent communication from England, or whether, in his state of destitution, he had thought of claiming the help of his friends at Tournebut, d'Ache despatched Flierlé to Mme. de Combray, and gave him two letters, advising him to use the greatest discretion. Flierlé set out on horseback from Caen in the morning of March 13th. At dawn next day he arrived at Rouen, and immediately repaired to the house of a Mme. Lambert, a milliner in the Rue de l'Hôpital, to whom one of the letters was addressed. "I gave it to her," he said, "on her staircase, without speaking to her, as I had been told to do, and set out that very morning for Tournebut, where I arrived between two and three o'clock. I gave Mme. de Combray the other letter, which she threw in the fire after having read it."

Flierlé slept at the château. Next day Bonnœil conducted him to Louviers, and there intrusted a packet of letters to him addressed to d'Aché. Both

directed their steps to Rouen, and the German fetched from the Rue de l'Hôpital, the milliner's reply, which she gave him herself without saying a word.

He immediately continued his journey, and by March 20th was back at Mandeville, and placed the precious mail in d'Aché's hands. The latter had scarcely read it before he sent David word to get his boat ready, and without losing a moment, the letters which had arrived from Rouen were taken out to sea to the English fleet, to be forwarded to London.

We are still ignorant of the contents of these mysterious despatches, and inquiry on this point is reduced to supposition. Some pretended that d'Aché sent the manifesto to Mme. de Combray, and that it was clandestinely printed in the cellars at Tournebut; others maintain that towards March 15th Bonnœil returned from Paris, bringing with him the correspondence of the secret royalist committee which was to be sent to the English Cabinet via Mandeville. D'Aché certainly attached immense importance to this expedition, which ought, according to him, to make the princes decide on the immediate despatch of funds, and to hasten the preparation for the attack on the island of Tahitou. But days passed and no reply came. In the agony of uncertainty he decided to approach Le Chevalier, whom he only knew by reputation as being a shrewd and resolute man. The meeting took place at Trévières towards the middle of April, 1807. Le Chevalier brought one of his aides-de-camp with him, but d'Aché came alone.

The names of these two men are so little known,



they occupy such a very humble place in history, that we can hardly imagine, now that we know how pitifully their dreams miscarried, how without being ridiculous they could fancy that any result whatever could come of their meeting. The surroundings made them consider themselves important: d'Aché was—or thought he was—the mouthpiece of the exiled King; as for Le Chevalier, whether from vain-glory or credulity he boasted of an immense popularity with the Chouans, and spoke mysteriously of the royalist committee which, working in Paris, had succeeded, he said, in rallying to the cause men of considerable importance in the entourage of the Emperor himself.

Since he had been Mme. Acquet's adored lover, Le Chevalier's visits to the Café Hervieux had become rarer; his parasites had dispersed, and although he still kept up his house in the Rue Saint-Sauveur at Caen, he spent the greater part of his time either at Falaise or at La Bijude, where his devoted mistress alternately lived. The police of Count Cafferelli, Prefect of Calvados, had ceased keeping an eye on him, and he even received a passport for Paris, whither he went frequently. He always returned more confident than before, and in the little group amongst whom he lived at Falaise—consisting of his cousin, Dusaussay, two Chouan comrades, Beaupaire and Desmontis; a doctor in the Frotté army, Révèrend; and the Notary of the Combray family, Maître Febre—he was never tired of talking in confidence about the secret Royalist Committee, and



the near approach of the Restoration. The revolution which was to bring it about, was to be a very peaceful one, according to him. Bonaparte, taken prisoner by two of his generals, each at the head of 40,000 men, was to be handed over to the English and replaced by "a regency, the members of which were to be chosen from among the senators who could be trusted." The Comte d'Artois was then to be recalled—or his son, the Duc de Berry—to take possession of the kingdom as Lieutenant-General.

Did Le Chevalier believe in this Utopia? It has been said that in propagating it "he only sought to intoxicate the people and excite them to acts of pillage, the profits of which would come to him without any of the danger." This accusation fits in badly with the chivalrous loyalty of his character. It seems more probable that on one of his journeys to Paris he fell into the trap set by the spy Perlet who, paid by the princes to be their chief intelligence agent, sold their correspondence to Fouché and handed over to the police the royalists who brought the letters. This Perlet had invented, as a bait for his trap, a committee of powerful persons who, he boasted, he had won over to the royal cause, and doubtless Le Chevalier was one of his only too numerous victims. Whatever it was, Le Chevalier took a pride in his high commissions, and went to meet d'Aché as an equal, if not a rival.

At the beginning, the conference was more than cold. These two men, so different in appearance and character, both aspired to play a great part and

were instinctively jealous of each other. Their own personal feelings divided them. One was the lover of Mme. Acquet de Férolles, the other was the friend of Mme. de Combray, and the latter blamed her daughter for her misconduct, and had forbidden her ever to come back to Tournebut. Le Chevalier, after the usual civilities, refused to continue the conversation till he was informed of the exact nature of the powers conferred by the King on his interlocutor, and the authority with which he was invested. Now, d'Aché had never had any written authority, and arrogantly intrenched himself behind the confidence which the princes had shown in him from the very first days of the revolution. He stated that he was expecting a regular commission from them. Whereupon Le Chevalier, seizing the advantage, called him an "agent of the English," and placing his pistols on the table "invited him to blow out his brains immediately." They both grew calmer, however, and explained their plans. Le Chevalier knew most of the Norman Chouans, either from having fought by their side, or from having made their acquaintance in the various prisons in Caen or Evreux, wherein he had been confined. He therefore undertook the enrollment and management of the army, the command of which he would assign to two men who were devoted to him. The name of one is not published; they say he was an ex-chief of Staff to Charette. The other was famous through the whole revolt of the Chouans under the pseudonym of General Antonio; his real name was Allain, and he had been working

with Le Chevalier since the year IX. The latter was sure also of the cooperation of his friend M. de Grimont, manager of the stud at Argentan, who would furnish the prince's army with the necessary cavalry; besides which he offered to go to Paris for the "great event," and took upon himself with the assistance of certain accomplices "to secure the imperial treasury." D'Aché, for his part, was to go to England to fetch the King, and was to preside over the disembarkation and lead the Russo-Swedish army through insurgent Normandy to the gates of the capital.

Their work thus assigned, the two men parted allies, but not friends. D'Aché was offended at Le Chevalier's pretensions; the latter returning to Mme. Acquet, did not disguise the fact that, in his opinion, d'Aché was nothing but a common intriguer and an agent of England.

There still remained the question of money which, for the moment, took precedence of all others. They had agreed that it was necessary to pillage the coffers of the state whilst waiting the arrival of subsidies from England, but neither d'Aché nor Le Chevalier expressed himself openly; each wished to leave the responsibility of the theft to the other. Later, they both obstinately rejected it, Le Chevalier affirming that d'Aché had ordered the stopping of public conveyances in the King's name, while d'Aché disowned Le Chevalier, accusing him of having brought the cause into disrepute by employing such means. The dispute is of little interest. The money was lacking,

and not only were the royal coffers empty, but what was of more immediate importance, Le Chevalier and his friends were without resources. In consequence of leading a wild life and sacrificing himself for his party, he had spent his entire fortune, and was overwhelmed with debts. The lawyer Vanier, who was entrusted with the management of his business affairs, lost his head at the avalanche of bills, protests and notes of hand which poured into his office, and which it was impossible to meet. The lawyer Lefebvre, a fat and sensual free-liver, was equally low in funds, and laid on the government the blame of the confusion into which his affairs had fallen, though it had been entirely his own fault. As for Le Chevalier himself, he attributed his ruin, not without justice, to his disinterestedness and devotion to the royal cause, which was his excuse for the past and the future. Mme. Acquet, who loved him blindly, had given her last louis to provide for his costly liberality. Touching letters from her are extant, proving how attached she was to him :

“I am herewith sending you a letter from Mme. Blins” (a creditor). “My only regret is that I have not the sum. It would have given me great pleasure to pay it for you, and then you would never have known. . . . I love you with all my heart. I am entirely yours, and there is nothing I would not do for you. . . . Love me as I love you. I embrace you tenderly.”

“There is nothing I would not do for you,”—and the poor woman was wretched in the knowledge that



the hero whom she idolised was hampered for want of small sums of money. She could not ward off the trouble, since her demand for a separation had recently been refused. Acquet was triumphant. She was reduced to living on a modest pension of 2,000 francs, and not able to sell what she had inherited from her father. One evening, when she and Lanoë were alone in the Hôtel de Combray, in the Rue du Tripot at Falaise, one part of which was rented to the collector of taxes, she heard through the wall the chinking of the money, which they were packing into bags. On hearing it she fell into a sort of delirium, thinking that here was the wherewithal to satisfy her lover's fancies. . . .

"Lanoë," she said suddenly, "I must have some money; I only want 10,000 francs."

The terrified Lanoë gave her no answer then, but a few days later, when he was driving her back in her cabriolet to Falaise from La Bijude, she returned to the charge, and gave him a piece of yellow wax wrapped up in cotton telling him to go and take an impression of the tax collector's lock as soon as they arrived at the Rue du Tripot. Lanoë excused himself, saying that the house belonged to M. Timoléon, and that disagreeable consequences might arise. But she insisted. "I must have the impression," she said. "I do not tell you why I want it, but I will have it." Lanoë, to get out of a task he did not like, went away and secretly took an impression of the lock of the hayloft. A key was made by this pattern, and when night came the Marquise de Com-



bray's daughter stole down—holding her breath and walking noiselessly—to the tax collector's office, and vainly tried to open the door.

About the same time Le Chevalier, who had just returned from a journey to Paris, heard from the lawyer Vanièr, who was quite as much in debt as his client, that the pecuniary situation was desperate. "I dread," wrote Vanièr, "the accomplishment of the psalm: *Unde veniet auxilium nobis quia perimus.*" To which Le Chevalier replied, as he invariably did: "In six weeks, or perhaps less, the King will be again on his throne. Brighter days will dawn, and we shall have good posts. Now is the time to show our zeal, for those who have done nothing will, as is fair, have nothing to expect." He added that the hour was propitious, "since Bonaparte was in the middle of Germany with his whole army."

He loved to talk this way, as it made him appear, as it were, Napoleon's rival, raising him to the place he held in his own imagination.

## CHAPTER V

### THE AFFAIR OF QUESNAY

THE lawyer, Lefebvre, of high stature, with broad shoulders and florid complexion, loved to dine well, and spent his time between billiards, "Calvados" and perorations in the cafés. For taking this part in the conspiracy he expected a fat sinecure on the return of the Bourbons, in recompense for his devotion.

Early in April, 1807, Lefebvre and Le Chevalier were dining together at the Hôtel du Point-de-France at Argentan. They had found Beaurepaire, Desmontis and the Cousin Dusaussay there; they went to the café and stayed there several hours. Allain, called General Antonio, whom Le Chevalier had chosen as his chief lieutenant, appeared and was presented to the others. Allain was over forty; he had a long nose, light eyes, a face pitted with smallpox, and a heavy black beard; the manner of a calm and steady bourgeois. Le Chevalier took a playing card, tore half of it off, wrote a line on it and gave it to Allain, saying, "This will admit you." They talked awhile in the embrasure of a window, and the lawyer caught these words: "Once in the church, you will go out by the door on the left, and there find a lane; it is there. . . ."

When Allain had gone Le Chevalier informed his

friends of the affair on hand. At the approach of each term, funds were passed between the principal towns of the department; from Alençon, Saint-Lô and Evreux money was sent to Caen, but these shipments took place at irregular dates, and were generally accompanied by an escort of gendarmes. As the carriage which took the funds to Alençon usually changed horses at Argentan, it was sufficient to know the time of its arrival in that town to deduce therefrom the hour of its appearance elsewhere. Now Le Chevalier had secured the cooperation of a hostler named Gauthier, called "Boismâle," who was bribed to let Dusaussay know when the carriage started. Dusaussay lived at Argentan, and by starting immediately on horseback, he could easily arrive at the place where the conspirators were posted several hours before the carriage. Allain had just gone to find Boismâle.

When he returned to the café, he gave the result of his efforts. The hostler had decided to help Le Chevalier, but the affair would probably not take place for six weeks or two months, which was longer than necessary to collect the little troop needed for the expedition. The rôles were assigned: Allain was to recruit men; the lawyer would procure guns wherewith to arm them; and besides this he allowed Allain to use a house in the Faubourg Saint-Laurent de Falaise, which he was commissioned to sell. Here could be established "a dépôt for arms and provisions," for one difficulty was to lodge and feed the recruits during the period of waiting. Le Chevalier

answered for the assistance of Mme. Acquet de Férolles, whom he easily persuaded to hide the men for a few days at least; he also offered as a meeting-place his house in the Rue de Saint-Sauveur at Caen.

The chief outlines of the affair being thus arranged, they parted, and the next day Allain took the road, having with him as usual, a complete surveyor's outfit, and a sort of diploma as "engineer" which served as a reference, and justified his continual moves. He was, moreover, a typical Chouan, determined and ready for anything, as able to command a troop as to track gendarmes; bold and cunning, he knew all the malcontents in the country, and could insure their obedience. The recruiting of this troop, armed, housed and provided for during two months, roaming the country, hiding in the woods, leading in the environs of Caen and Falaise the existence of Mohicans, without causing astonishment to a single gendarme, and, satisfied with having enough to eat and to drink, never thinking of asking what was required of them, is beyond belief. And it was in the most brilliant year of the imperial régime, at the apogee of the much boasted administration, which in reality was so hollow. The Chouans had sown such disorganisation in the West, that the authorities of all grades found themselves powerless to struggle against this ever-recurring epidemic. Count Caffarelli, préfet of Calvados, in his desire to retain his office, treated the refractories with an indolence bordering on complicity, and continued to send Fouché the most optimistic reports of the excellent temper of his fellow-citizens

and their inviolable attachment to the imperial constitution.

It was the middle of April, 1807. Allain passed through Caen, where he joined Flierlé, and both of them hiding by day and marching at night, gained the borders of Brittany. Allain knew where to find men; twenty-five leagues from Caen, in the department of La Manche, some way from any highroad, is situated the village of La Mancellière, whose men were all refractories. General Antonio, who was very popular among the malcontents, was shown the house of a woman named Harel whose husband had joined the sixty-third brigade in the year VIII and deserted six months after, "overcome by the desire to see his wife and children." His story resembled many others; conscription was repugnant to these peasants of ancient France, who could not resign themselves to losing sight of their clock tower; they were brave enough and ready to fight, but to them, the immediate enemy was the gendarmes, the "Bleus," whom they saw in their villages carrying off the best men, and they felt no animosity against the Prussians and Austrians who only picked a quarrel with Bonaparte.

As he came with an offer of work to be well paid for, Allain was well received by Mme. Harel, who with her children was reduced to extreme poverty. It was a question, he said, "of a surveying operation authorised by the government." Harel came out of hiding in the evening, and eagerly accepted his old chief's proposition, and as the latter needed some strong pole-carriers, Harel presented two friends to



the "General" under the names of "Grand-Charles" and "Cœur-de-Roi." Allain completed his party by the enrollment of three others, Le Héricey, called "La Sagesse"; Lebrée, called "Fleur d'Épine"; and Le Lorault, called "La Jeunesse." They drank a cup of cider together, and left the same evening, Allain and Flierlé leading them.

In six stages they arrived at Caen, and Allain took them to Le Chevalier's house in the Rue Saint Sauveur. They had to stay there three weeks. They were put in the loft on some hay, and Chalange, Le Chevalier's servant, who took them their food, always found them sleeping or playing cards. In order not to awaken the suspicions of the usual tradespeople, Lerouge, called "Bornet," formerly a baker, undertook to make the bread for the house in the Rue Saint-Sauveur. One day he brought in his bread cart four guns procured by Lefebvre; Harel cleaned them, took them to pieces, and hid them in a bundle of straw. Then the guns were put on a horse which Lerouge led out at night from the cellar which opened on the Rue Quimcampoix at the back of the house. The men followed, and under Allain's guidance crossed the town; when they reached the extremity of the Faubourg de Vaucelles they stopped and distributed the arms. Lerouge went back to town with the horse, and the little troop disappeared on the high-road.

At about five leagues from Caen, after having passed Langannerie, where a brigade of gendarmerie was stationed, the Falaise road traverses a small but

dense thicket called the wood of Quesnay. The men stopped there, and passed a whole day hidden among the trees. The following night Allain led them a three hours' march to a large abandoned house, whose doors were open, and installed them in the loft on some hay. This was the Château of Donnay.

Le Chevalier had not deceived himself. Mme. Acquet had received his suggestion with enthusiasm; the thought that she would be useful to her hero, that she would share his danger, blinded her to all other considerations. She had offered Allain and his companions the hospitality of Bijude, without any fear of compromising her lover, who made long sojourns there, and she decided on the audacious plan of lodging them with her husband, who, inhabiting a wing of the Château of Donnay, abandoned the main body of the château, which could be entered from the back without being seen. Perhaps she hoped to throw a suspicion of complicity on Acquet if the retreat should be discovered. As to Le Chevalier, learning that d'Aché had just left Mandeville and gone to England "after having announced his speedy return with the prince, with munitions, money, etc.," he left for Paris, having certain arrangements, he said, to make with the "Comité secret." Before quitting La Bijude, he enjoined his mistress, in case the coup should be made in his absence, to remit the money seized to Dusaussay, who would bring it to him in Paris where the committee awaited it. She gave him a curl of her fine black hair to have a medallion made of it, and made him promise "that he would not forget to bring

her some good eau-de-cologne." They then embraced each other, and he left. It was May 17, 1807, and this was the last time she saw him.

She did not remain idle, but herself prepared the food of the seven men lodged in the château. Bundles of hay and straw served them for beds; they were advised not to go out, even for the most pressing needs and they stayed there ten days. Every evening Mme. Acquet appeared in this malodorous den, holding her parasol in her gloved hands, dressed in a light muslin, and a straw hat. She was usually accompanied by her servant Rosalie Dupont, a big strong girl, and Joseph Buquet a shoemaker at Donnay both carrying large earthen plates containing baked veal and potatoes. It was the hour of kindness and good cheer; the châtelaine did not disdain to preside at the repast, coming and going among the unkempt men, asking if these "good fellows" needed anything and were satisfied with their fare. She was the most impatient of all; whether she took the political illusions of those who had drawn her into the affair seriously, and was anxious to expose herself for "the good cause"; whether her fatal passion for La Chevalier had completely blinded her, she took her share in the attack that was being prepared, which it seemed to her, would put an end to all her misfortunes. She had already committed an act of foolish boldness in receiving and keeping Allain's recruits in a house occupied by her husband, and in daring to visit them there herself; she was thus compromising herself, as if she enjoyed it, under the eyes of her

most implacable enemy, and no doubt Acquet, informed by his well-trained spies, of all that happened, refrained from intervention for fear of interrupting an adventure in which his wife must lose herself irremediably.

Mme. Acquet also behaved as if she was certain of the complicity of the whole country; she arranged the slightest details of the expedition with astonishing quickness of mind. With her own hands she made large wallets of coarse cloth, to carry provisions for the party, and contain the money taken from the chests. She hastened to Falaise to ask Lefebre to receive Allain and Flierlé while awaiting the hour of action. Lefebre who had already fixed his price and exacted a promise of twelve thousand francs from the funds, would only, however, half commit himself. He nevertheless agreed to lodge Allain and Flierlé in the vacant building in the Faubourg Saint-Laurent. Reassured on this point Mme. Acquet returned to Donnay; during the night of 28th May, the men left the château without their arms and were conducted to a barn, where they were left all day alone with a small cask of cider which they soon emptied. Mme. Acquet was meanwhile preparing another retreat for them. A short way from the Church of Donnay there was an isolated house belonging to the brothers Buquet, who were devoted to the Combrays; Joseph, the shoemaker, had in the absence of Le Chevalier, been known as Mme. Acquet's lover in the village, and if in the absence of any definite testimony, it is possible to save this poor



woman's memory from this new accusation, we must still recognise the fact that she exercised an extraordinary influence over this man. He submitted to her blindly "by the rights she had granted him," said a report addressed to the Emperor. Whatever the reason, she had only to say the word for Joseph Buquet to give her his house, and the six men took possession next day. The Buquets' mother undertook to feed them for four days; they left her at dusk on the 2d June; Joseph showed them the road and even led them a short way.

The poor fellows dragged along till morning, losing themselves often and not daring to ask the way or to follow beaten tracks. They met Allain at dawn, one mile from Falaise, on the edge of a wood near the hamlet of Jalousie; he took them across Aubigny to an isolated inn at the end of the village.

Lefebre had presented Allain to the innkeeper the night before, asking if he would receive "six honest deserters whom the gendarmes tormented," for a few days, and the man had replied that he would lodge them with pleasure.

As soon as they arrived at the inn Allain and his men, dropping with fatigue, asked for breakfast and went at once to the room prepared for them. It was half past four in the morning; they lay down on the straw and did not move all day except for meals. The night and all next day passed in the same manner. On Thursday June 4th they put some bread, bacon and jugs of cider in their wallets and left about



nine in the evening. On Friday Allain appeared at the inn of Aubigny alone; he ordered the servant to take some food to the place where the Caen and Harcourt roads met. Two men were waiting there, who took the food and went off in haste. Allain went to bed about two in the morning; about midday on Saturday as he was sitting down to table a carriage stopped at the inn door; Lefebvre and Mme. Acquet got out. They brought seven guns which were carried up to the loft. They talked; Mme. Acquet took some lemons from a little basket, and cut them into a bowl filled with white wine and brandy, and she and Lefebvre drank while consulting together. The heat was intolerable and all three were overcome. Mme. Acquet had to be helped to her carriage and Lefebvre undertook to conduct her to Falaise. Allain, left alone at Aubigny, ordered supper "for six or seven persons." He was attending to its preparation when a horseman appeared and asked to speak with him. It was Dusaussay who brought news. He had come straight from Argentan where he had seen the coach, laden with chests of silver, enter the yard of the inn of Point-de-France; he described the waggon, the harness and the driver, then remounted and rode rapidly away. Just then the entire band reappeared, led by Flierlé. Arms were distributed, and the men stood round the table eating hastily. They filled their wallets with bread and cold meat and left at night. Allain and Flierlé accompanied them and returned to the inn after two hours' absence. They did not sleep; they were heard pacing heavily up and

down the loft until daylight. On Sunday, June 7, Allain paid the reckoning, bought a short axe and an old gun from the innkeeper, making eight guns in all at the disposal of the band. At seven in the morning he left with Flierlé, and three leagues from there, arrived at the wood of Quesnay where his men had passed the night.

The waggon destined for the transportation of the funds had been loaded on the 5th at Alençon, in the yard of the house of M. Decrès, receiver-general of the Orne, with five heavy chests containing 33,489 francs, 92 centimes. On the 6th, the carrier, Jean Gousset, employed by the manager of stage coaches at Alençon, had harnessed three horses to it, and escorted by two gendarmes had taken the road to Argentan, where he arrived at five in the evening. He stopped at Point-de-France, where he had to take a sixth chest containing 33,000 francs, which was delivered in the evening by the agents of M. Larroc, receiver of finances. The carriage, carefully covered, remained in the inn yard during the night. Gousset, who had been drinking, went to and fro "talking to every one of his charge"; he even called a traveller, M. Lapeyrière, and winking at the chest that was being hoisted on the waggon, said: "If we each had ten times as much our fortunes would be made." He harnessed up at four o'clock on Sunday, the 7th. He had been given a fourth horse, and three gendarmes accompanied him. They made the five leagues between Argentan and Falaise rather slowly, arriving about half past ten. Gousset stopped with Bertaine

at the "Cheval Noir," where the gendarmes left him; he dined there, and as it was very hot, rested till three in the afternoon, during which time the waggon stayed in front of the inn unguarded. It was noticed that the horses were harnessed three hours before starting, and the conclusion was drawn that Gousset did not want to arrive before night at Langannerie, where he would sleep. In fact, he took his time. At a quarter past three he started, without escort, as all the men of the brigade of Falaise were employed in the recruiting that took place that day. As he left the village he chanced to meet Vinchon, gendarme of the brigade of Langannerie, who was returning home on foot with his nephew, a young boy of seventeen, named Antoine Morin. They engaged in conversation with the carrier, who walked on the left of the waggon, and went with him. These chance companions were in no hurry, and Gousset did not appear to be in any haste to arrive. At the last houses of the suburbs he offered some cider; after some hundred yards the gendarme returned the compliment and they stopped at the "Sauvage." A league further, another stop was made at the "Vieille Cave." Gousset then proposed a game of skittles, which the gendarme and Morin accepted. It was nearly seven in the evening when they passed Potigny. The evening was magnificent and the sun still high on the horizon; as they knew they would not see another inn until the next stage was reached, they made a fourth stop there. At last Gousset and his companions started again; they could now reach

Langannerie in an hour, where they would stop for the night.

The evening before, Mme. Acquet de Férolles, returning to Falaise with Lefebvre, had gone to bed more sick with fatigue than drink; however, she had returned to Donnay at dawn in the fear that her absence might awaken suspicion. This Sunday, the 7th June, was indeed the Fête-Dieu, and she must decorate the wayside altars as she did each year.

Lanoë, who had arrived the evening before from his farm at Glatigny, worked all the morning hanging up draperies, and covering the walls with green branches. Mme. Acquet directed the arrangements for the procession with feverish excitement, filling baskets with rose leaves, grouping children, placing garlands. Doubtless her thoughts flew from this flowery fête to the wood yonder, where at this minute the men whom she had incited waited under the trees, gun in hand. Perhaps she felt a perverse pleasure in the contrast between the hymns sung among the hedges and the criminal anxiety that wrung her. Did she not confess later that in the confusion of her mind she had not feared to call on God for the success of "her enterprise"?

When, about five o'clock, the procession was at an end, Mme. Acquet went through the rose-strewn streets to find her confidante, Rosalie Dupont. Such was her impatience that she soon left this girl, irresistibly drawn to the road where her own fate and

that of her lover were being decided. Lanoë, who was returning to Glatigny in the evening, was surprised to meet the châtelaine of La Bijude in a little wood near Clair-Tizon. She was scarcely a league from the place where the men were hidden. From her secluded spot she could, with beating heart, motionless and mute with anguish, hear the noise of shooting, which rung out clear in the silence of the summer evening. It was exactly a quarter to eight.

The waggon had, indeed, left Potigny at seven o'clock. A little way from the village, the road, which had been quite straight for six leagues, descended a low hill at the foot of which is the wood of Quesnay, a low thicket of hazel, topped by a few oaks. Allain had posted his men along the road under the branches; on the edge of the wood towards Falaise stood Flierlé, Le Héricey, and Fleur d'Épine. Allain himself was with Harel and Cœur-le-Roi, at the end nearest Langannerie. Grand-Charles and Le Lorault were placed in the middle of the wood at equal distances from these two groups.

The eight men had waited since midday for the appearance of the treasure. They began to lose patience and spoke of returning to Aubigny for supper when they heard the rumbling of the waggon descending the hill. It came down rapidly, Gousset not having troubled to put on the brake. They could hear him shouting to the horses. Walking on the left of the waggon he drove them by means of a long rope;



his little dog trotted beside him. Vinchon and Morin were, for the moment, left behind by the increased speed of the waggon. The men at the first and second posts allowed it to pass without appearing ; it was now between the two thickets through which the road ran ; in a few minutes it attained the edge of the wood near Langannerie, when suddenly, Gousset saw a man in a long greatcoat and top-boots in the middle of the road, with his gun pointed at him ; it was Allain.

“ Halt, you rascal ! ” he cried to the carrier.

Two of his companions, attired only in drawers and shirt, with a coloured handkerchief knotted round the head, came out of the wood, shouldered arms and took aim. With a tremendous effort, Gousset, seized with terror, turned the whole team to the left, and with oaths and blows flung it on to a country road which crossed the main road obliquely a little way from the end of the wood. But in an instant the three men were upon him ; they threw him down and held a gun to his head while two others came out of the wood and seized the horses’ heads. The struggle was short ; they tore off Gousset’s cravat and bound his eyes with it, he was searched and his knife taken, then cuffed, pushed into the wood and promised a ball if he moved.

But Vinchon and Morin, who were behind, had seen the waggon disappear in the wood. Morin, not caring to join in the scuffle, hurried across the fields, turned the edge of the wood, and ran towards Langannerie to inform the gendarmes. Vinchon, on the

contrary, drew his sabre and advanced towards the road, but he had only taken a few steps when he received a triple discharge from the first post. He fell, with a ball in his shoulder, and rolled in the ditch, his blood flowing. The men then hastened to the waggon; they cut the cords of the tarpaulin with Gousset's knife, uncovered the chests and attacked them with hatchets. Whilst two of the brigands unharnessed the horses, the others flung the money, handfuls of gold and crowns, pell-mell into their sacks. The first one, bursting with silver, was so heavy that it took three men to hoist it on to the back of a horse; Gousset himself, in spite of his bandaged eyes, was invited to lend a hand and obeyed gropingly. They were smashing the second chest when the cry, "To arms!" interrupted them. Allain rallied his men, and lined them up along the road.

Morin, on arriving at Langannerie had only found the corporal and one other gendarme there; they mounted immediately and galloped to the wood of Quesnay. It was almost night when they reached the edge of the wood. A volley of shots greeted them; the corporal was hit in the leg, and his horse fell mortally wounded; his companion, who was deaf, did not know which way to turn. Seeing his chief fall, he thought it best to retreat; and ran to the hamlet of Quesnay to get help. The noise of the firing had already alarmed the neighbourhood; the tocsin sounded at Potigny, OUILLY-le-Tesson and Sousmont; peasants flocked to each end of the wood, but they were unarmed and dared not advance. Al-

lain had posted five of his men as advance-guard who fired in the thicket at their own discretion, and kept the most determined of the enemy at bay. Behind this curtain of shooters the noise could be heard of axes breaking open chests, planks torn apart and oaths of the brigands in haste to complete their pillage. This extraordinary scene lasted nearly an hour. At last, at a call, the firing ceased, the robbers plunged into the thicket, and the steps of the heavily-laden horse, urged on by the men, were heard disappearing on the crossroad.

They took the road to Ussy, with their booty and the carrier Gousset, still with his eyes bandaged and led by Grand-Charles. They travelled fast, at night—to avoid pursuit. Less than half a league from Quesnay the road they followed passed the hamlet of Aisy, on the outskirts of Sousmont, whose mayor had a château there. He was called M. Dupont d'Aisy, and had this very evening entertained Captain Pinteville, commander of the gendarmerie of the district. The party had been broken up by the distant noise of shooting. M. Dupont at once sent his servants to give the alarm at Sousmont; in less than an hour he had mustered thirty villagers and putting himself at their head with Captain Pinteville he marched towards Quesnay. They had not gone a hundred paces when they encountered Allain's men, and the fight began. The brigands kept up a well-sustained fire, which produced no other effect than to disperse the peasants. Dupont d'Aisy and Captain Pinteville himself considered it dangerous to continue the struggle against

such determined adversaries; they retired their men, and resolutely turning their backs to the enemy retreated towards Quesnay.

When they arrived in the wood a crowd was already there; from the neighbouring villages where the tocsin still sounded, people came, drawn entirely by curiosity. They laughed at the fine trick played on the government, they thought the affair well managed, and did not hesitate to applaud its success. They surrounded the waggon, half-sunk in the ruts in the road, and searched the little wood for traces of the combat.

The arrival of the mayor and Captain Pinteville restored things to order somewhat. They had brought lanterns, and in the presence of the gendarmes who had now arrived in numbers, the peasants collected the remains of the chests, and replaced in them the coppers that the robbers had scornfully thrown in the grass. They found the carrier's leather portfolio containing the two bills of lading, in the thicket, and learned therefrom that the government had lost a little over 60,000 francs, and in face of this respectable sum, their respect for the men who had done the deed increased. In the densest part of the wood they found a sort of hut made of branches, and containing bones, empty bottles and glasses, and the legend immediately grew that the brigands had lived there "for weeks," waiting for a profitable occasion. Those who had taken part in the fight from a distance described "these gentlemen," who numbered twelve, they said; three wore grey overcoats



and top-boots; another witness had been struck "by the exceeding smallness of two of the brigands."

At last, the money collected and put in the chests, they harnessed two horses to the waggon and took it to the mayor's. He was now unsparing of attention; he did not leave the waggon which was put in his yard, and locked up the broken chests and money which amounted to 5,404 francs. And when M. le Comte Caffarelli, préfet of Calvados arrived at dawn, he was received by Dupont-d'Aisy, and after having heard all the witnesses and received all information possible, he sent the minister of police one of the optimistic reports that he prepared with so much assurance. In this one he informed his Excellency that "after making examination the shipment had been found intact, except the chests containing the government money." M. Caffarelli knew to perfection the delicate art of administrative correspondence and with a great deal of cool water, could slip in the gilded pill of disagreeable truth.

This model functionary spent the day at Aisy waiting for news; the peasants and gendarmes scoured the country with precaution, for, since the night, the legend had grown and it was told, not without fear, how M. Dupont d'Aisy had courageously given battle to an army of brigands. About midday the searchers returned leading the four horses which they had found tied to a hedge near the village of Placy, and poor Gousset who was found calmly seated in the shade of a tree near a wheat-field. He said that the band had left him there very early in the morning after



having made him march all night with bandaged eyes. At the end of an hour and a half, hearing nothing, he had ventured to unfasten the bandage, and not knowing the country, had waited till some one came to seek him. He could give no information respecting the robbers, except that they marched very fast and gave him terrible blows. M. Caffarelli commiserated the poor man heartily, charged him to take the waggon and smashed chests back to Caen, then, after having warmly congratulated M. Dupont d'Aisy on his fine conduct, he returned home.

After the scuffle at Aisy, Allain and his companions had marched in haste to Donnay, but missed their way. Crossing the village of Saint-Germain-le-Vasson, they seized a young miller who was taking the air on his doorstep, and who consented to guide them, though very much afraid of this band of armed men with heavily-laden wallets. He led them as far as Acqueville and Allain sent him away with ten crowns. It was nearly midnight when they reached Donnay; they passed behind the château where Joseph Buquet was waiting for them and led them to his house. He and his brother made the eight men enter, enjoined silence, helped them to empty their sacks into a hole that had been made at the end of the garden, then gave them a drink. After an hour's rest Allain gave the signal for departure. He was in haste to get his men out of the department of Calvados, and shelter them from the first pursuit of Caffarelli's police. At daybreak they crossed the Orne by the bridge of La Landelle, threw their guns into a

wheat-field and separated after receiving each 200 francs.

This day, the 8th June, passed in the most perfect calm for the inhabitants of Donnay. Mme. Acquet did not leave La Bijude. In the afternoon a tanner of Placy, called Brazard, passed the house and called to Hébert whom he saw in the garden. He told him that when he got up that morning he had found four horses tied to his hedge. The gendarmes from Langannerie had come and claimed them saying "they belonged to the Falaise-Caen coach which had been attacked in the night by Chouans." Hébert was much astonished; Mme. Acquet did not believe it; but the report spread and by evening the news was known to the whole village.

Acquet had remained invisible for a month; his instinct of hatred and some information slyly obtained, warned him that his wife was working her own ruin, and he would do nothing to stop her good work. Some days before, Aumont, his gardener, had remarked one morning that the dew was brushed off the grass of the lawn, and showed footsteps leading to the cellar of the château, but Acquet did not seem to attach any importance to these facts.

He learned from his servant of the robbery of the coach. The next day, Redet, the butcher of Meslay, said that ten days previously, when he was passing the ruins of the Abbey of Val "his mare shied, frightened at the sight of seven or eight men, who came out from behind a hedge;" they asked him the way to Rouen. Redet, without answering, made off,

and as he told every one of this encounter, Hébert the liegeman of Mme. de Combray, had instantly begged him not to spread it about. If Acquet had retained any doubt, this would have satisfied him. He hurried to Meslay to consult with his friend Darthenay, and the next day, he wrote to the commandant of gendarmerie inviting him to search the Château of Donnay.

The visit took place on Friday, 12th June, and was conducted by Captain Pinteville. Acquet offered to guide him, and the search brought some singular discoveries. Certain doors of this great house, long abandoned, were found with strong locks recently put on; others were nailed up and had to be broken in. "In a dark, retired loft that it was difficult to enter" (Acquet conducted the gendarmes) "a pile of hay still retained the impress of six men who had slept on it; some fresh bones, scraps of bread and meat, and the dirt bore witness that the band had lived there; some sheets of paper belonging to a memoir printed by Hely de Bonnœil, brother of Mme. Acquet were rolled into cartridges and hidden in a corner under the tiles. They also found the sacks that the Buquets had hidden there after the theft; in the floor of the cellar a hole, "two and a half feet square, and of the same depth had been dug to hold the money;" they had taken the precaution to tear up the flooring above so that the dépôt could be watched from there. The idea of hiding the treasure here had been abandoned, as we know, in favour of Buquets'; but the discovery was important and Pinteville drew up a report of it.

But things went no further. What suspicion could attach to the owners of Donnay? The brigands, it is true, had made use of their house, but there were no grounds for an accusation of complicity in that. Neither Pinteville nor Caffarelli, who transmitted the report to the minister, thought of pushing their enquiries any further.

Fouché knew no more about it, but he thought that the affair was being feebly conducted. It seemed evident that the attempt at Quesnay would swell the already long list of thefts of public funds, by those who would forever remain unpunished. Réal, instinctively scenting d'Aché in the business, remembered Captain Manginot who at the time of Georges Cadoudal's plot, had succeeded in tracing the stages of the conspirators between Biville and Paris, and to whom they owed the discovery of the rôle played by d'Aché in the conspiracy.

Manginot then received an order to proceed to Calvados immediately. On the 23d June he arrived at Caffarelli's bearing this letter of introduction: "The skill, the zeal and good fortune of this officer in these cases, is well known; they were proved in a similar affair, and I ask you to welcome him as he deserves to be welcomed." The préfet was quite willing; he knew too well the habits of the Chouans, and their cleverness in disappearing to have any personal illusions as to the final result of the adventure, but he said nothing and on the contrary showed the greatest confidence in the dexterity of a man who stood so well at court.

Manginot began with a fresh search at Donnay; and, as his reputation obliged him to be successful, and as he was not unwilling to astonish the authorities of Calvados by the quickness of his perceptions, he caused Acquet de Férolles to be arrested. It was he who had first warned the gendarmes of the sojourn of the brigands at Donnay, and this seemed exceedingly suspicious; the same day he gave the order to take Hébert. Several people in the village insinuated that Acquet and Hébert were irreconcilable enemies and that Manginot was on the wrong track; but the detective's head was now swelled with importance and he would not draw back. Following his extravagant deductions he decided that the complicity of Gousset, convicted of drinking and playing skittles the whole way, was undoubted, and the poor man was arrested in his village where he had returned to his wife and children to recover from his excitement. At last Manginot, evidently animated by his blunders, took it into his head that Dupont d'Aisy himself might well have kept Pinteville at dinner and excited the peasants in order to secure the retreat of the brigands, and issued a warrant against him to the stupefaction of Caffarelli who thus saw imprisoned all those whose conduct he had praised, and whom he had given as examples of devotion. Thus, in a region where he had only to touch, so to say, to catch a criminal, Captain Manginot was unlucky enough to incarcerate only the innocent, and to complete the irony, these innocent prisoners made such a poor face before the court of enquiry that his sus-



pitions were justified. Acquet was very anxious to denounce his wife, but he would not speak without certainty and the magistrate before whom he appeared at Falaise notes that in the course of interrogations "he contradicted himself; his replies were far from satisfactory, though he arranged them with the greatest care and reflected long before speaking." At the first insinuation he made against Mme. de Combray and her daughter, the judge indignantly silenced him, and sent him well-guarded to Caen where he was put in close custody. As to Hébert, not wishing to compromise the ladies of La Bijude to whom he was completely devoted, he scarcely replied to the questions put to him; all, even to Dupont d'Aisy lent themselves to the suspicions of Manginot. Sixty guns were found at the mayor's house, which seemed an excessive number, even for the great sportsman he prided himself on being, and here again all indications tended to convince Manginot that he was on the right track.

Mme. Acquet, meanwhile feigned the greatest security. Seeing things straying from the right way, she might indeed imagine that she was removed from all danger, and she had besides, other anxieties. The Chevalier had been waiting in Paris since the 7th of June for the money he so urgently needed, and as nothing appeared in spite of his reiterated demands, he decided to come and fetch it himself; he did not dare, however, to appear near Falaise, so arranged a meeting at Laigle with Lefebvre, earnestly entreating him to bring him all the money he possibly could.

But the Buquets, with whom the 60,000 francs had been left on the 7th June, obstinately refused to give it up in spite of Mme. Acquet's entreaties; they had removed the money from their garden and hidden it in various places which they jealously kept secret. However, through her influence over Joseph, Mme. Acquet succeeded in obtaining 3,300 francs which she gave the lawyer to take to Le Chevalier, but Lefebvre, as soon as he got hold of the money, declared that he had been promised 12,000 francs for his assistance, and that he would keep this on account. He went to meet Le Chevalier at Laigle however, and to calm his impatience told him that Dusaussay was going to start for Paris immediately with 60,000 francs which he would give him intact. Mme. Acquet was desperate; prudence forbade her trying to overcome the Buquets' obstinacy, and they, in order to keep the money, asserted that it belonged to the royal exchequer, and they were responsible for it; so the unhappy woman found that she had committed a crime that the obstinacy of these rapacious peasants rendered useless. She was ready to abandon all in order to rejoin Le Chevalier, ready even to expatriate herself with him, when they heard that Mme. de Combray, hearing rumours of what had happened in Lower Normandy, had decided to come to Falaise, to plead the cause of her farmer, Hébert. She had left Tournebut on the 13th July and taken the Caen coach to Evreux.

Mme. Acquet had gone to Langannerie to meet her mother, and when Mme. de Combray descended

from the coach the young woman threw herself into her arms. As the Marquise seemed rather surprised at this display of feeling to which she had become unaccustomed, her daughter said in a low voice, sobbing :

“ Save me, mama, save me ! ”

Mother and daughter resumed the affectionate confidence of former days. While the horses were being changed and the postillions were taking a drink in the inn, they seated themselves beneath a tree near the road. Mme. Acquet made a full confession. She told how her love for Le Chevalier had led her to join in the affair of June 7th, to keep Allain and his men, and to hide the stolen money with the Buquets. If it should be found there she was lost, and it was important to get it from the Buquets and send it to the leaders of the party for whom it was intended. She did not dare to mention Le Chevalier this time, but she argued that for fear of her husband's spies she could neither take the money to her own house, nor change it at any bankers in Caen and Falaise ; the whole country knew she was reduced to the last expedients.

Mme. de Combray feared no such dangers, and considered that “ no one would be astonished to see 50,000 or 60,000 francs at her disposal.” But she approved less of some other points in the affair, not that she was astonished to find her daughter compromised in such an adventure, for how many similar ones had she not helped to prepare in her Château of Tournebut ? Had she not inoculated her daughter with her political fanaticism in representing men like

Hingant de Saint-Maur, Raoul Gaillard and Saint-Réjant as martyrs? And by what right could she be severe, when she herself, daughter of the President of the Cour des Comptes of Normandy, had been ready to join in a theft which, "the sanctity of the cause," rendered praiseworthy in her eyes? The Marquise de Combray, without knowing it, was a Jacobite reversed; she accepted brigandage as the terrorists formerly accepted the guillotine; the hoped-for end justified the means.

And so she did not pour out reproaches; she grew angry at the mention of Le Chevalier whom she hated, but Mme. Acquet calmed her with the assurance that her lover had acted under the express orders of d'Aché and that everything had been arranged between the two men. As long as her hero was concerned in the affair, Mme. de Combray was happy to take a hand. That evening she reached Falaise, and leaving her daughter in the Rue du Tripot, she asked hospitality from one of her relations, Mme. de Tréprel. Next morning she sent for Lefebvre. Mme. Acquet, before introducing him, coached him thus, "Say as little as possible about Le Chevalier, and insist that d'Aché arranged everything." On this ground Lefebvre found Mme. de Combray most conciliating, and he had neither to employ prayers nor entreaties, to obtain her promise to get the 60,000 francs from the Buquets; "she consented without any difficulty or adverse opinion; she seemed very zealous and pleased at the turn things had taken, and offered herself to take the money to Caen, and lodge



it with Nourry, d'Aché's banker." Mme. Acquet here observed that she was not at liberty to dispose of the funds thus. She had only taken part in the affair from love, and cared little for the royalist exchequer; she only cared that her devotion should profit the man she adored, and if the money was sent to d'Aché, all her trouble would be useless. She tried to insist, saying that Dusaussay would take the money to the royalist treasurer in Paris, that Le Chevalier was waiting for it in order to go to Poitou where his presence was indispensable. But Mme. de Combray was inflexible on this point; the entire sum should be delivered to d'Aché's banker, or she would withdraw her assistance. Mme. Acquet was obliged to yield with a heavy heart, and they began at once to consider the best means of transporting it. The Marquise sent Jouanne, the son of the old cook at Glatigny, to tell Lanoë that she wished to see him at once. Jouanne made the six leagues between Falaise and Glatigny at one stretch, and returned without taking breath, with Lanoë, who put him up behind him on his horse. They had scarcely arrived when Mme. de Combray ordered Lanoë to get a carriage at Donnay and prepare for a journey of several days. Lanoë objected a little, said it was harvest time, and that he had important work to finish, but all that mattered little to the Marquise, who was firm and expected to be obeyed. Mme. Acquet also insisted saying, "You know that mama only feels safe when you drive her and that you are always well paid for it." This decided Lanoë who started for Bijude where he slept that night. Mme.



de Combray did not spare her servants, and distance was not such an obstacle to those people, accustomed to marching and riding, as it is nowadays. This fact will help to explain some of the incidents that are to follow.

On Thursday, July 16th, Lanoë returned to Falaise with a little cart that a peasant of Donnay had lent him, to which he had harnessed his horse and another lent him by Desjardins, one of Mme. de Combray's farmers. The two women got in and started for La Bijude, Lefebvre accompanying them to the suburbs. He arranged a meeting with them at Caen two days later, and gave them a little plan he had drawn which would enable them to avoid the more frequented highroad.

Mme. de Combray and her daughter slept that night at La Bijude. The next day was spent in arguing with the Buquets who did not dare to resist the Marquise's commands, and at night they delivered, against their will, two sacks containing 9,000 francs in crowns which she caused to be placed in the cart, which was housed in the barn. It was impossible to take more the first time, and Mme. Acquet rejoiced, hoping that the rest of the sum would remain at her disposal. The Marquise had judged it prudent to send Lanoë away to the fair at Saint-Clair which was held in the open country about a league away, and they only saw him again at the time fixed for their departure on Saturday. He has left an account of the journey, which though evidently written in a bad temper, is rather picturesque.

"I returned from the fair," he says, "towards one o'clock in the afternoon, and while I was harnessing the horses I saw a valise and night bag in the carriage. Colin, the servant at La Bijude, threw two bundles of straw in the carriage for the ladies to sit on, and Mme. de Combray gave me a portmanteau, a package which seemed to contain linen, and an umbrella to put in the carriage. On the road I made the horses trot, but Mme. Acquet told me not to go so fast because they didn't want to arrive at Caen before evening, seeing that they had stolen money in the carriage. I looked at her, but said nothing, but I said to myself: 'This is another of her tricks; if I had known this before we started I would have left them behind; she used deceit to compromise me, not being able to do so openly.' When I reproached her for it some days later she said: 'I suspected that if I had told you of it, you would not have gone.' During the journey the ladies talked together, but the noise of the carriage prevented me from hearing what they said. However, I heard Mme. Acquet say that this money would serve to pay some debts or to give to the unfortunate. I also heard her say that Le Chevalier had great wit, and Mme. de Combray replied that M. d'Aché's wit was keener; that Le Chevalier had perhaps a longer tongue. . . ."

The itinerary arranged by Lefebvre, left the main road at Saint-Andre-de-Fontenay near the hamlet of Basse-Allemagne; night was falling when Lanoë's carriage crossed the Orne at the ferry of Athis. From there they went to Bretteville-sur-Odon in or-

der to enter the town as if they had come from Vire or Bayeux. The notary had arrived during the day at Caen, and after having left his horse at the inn at Vaucelles, he crossed the town on foot and went to meet "the treasure" on the Vire road. Just as eight was striking he reached the first houses in Bretteville and was going to turn back, astonished at not meeting the cart when Mme. Acquet called to him from a window. He entered; Mme. de Combray and her daughter had stopped there while Lanoë was having one of the wheels mended. They took some refreshment, rested the horses and set out again at ten o'clock. Lefebre got in with them and when they arrived at Granville he got down and paid the duty on the two bundles of straw that were in the waggon, and then entered the town without further delay.

By the notary's advice they had decided to take the money to Gélin's inn, in the Rue Pavée. Gélin was the son-in-law of Lerouge, called Bornet, whom Le Chevalier sometimes employed, but the waggon was too large to get into the courtyard of the inn; some troops had been passing that day and the house was filled with soldiers. They could not stay there, but had to leave the money there, and while Gélin watched, the Marquise, uneasy at finding herself in such a place, unable to leave the yard because the waggon stopped the door, had to assist in unloading it. Two men were very busy about the waggon, one of them held a dark lantern; Lefebre, Lerouge and even Mme. Acquet pulled the sacks from the straw and threw them into the house by a window on the ground

floor. Mme. de Combray seemed to feel her decadence for the first time; she found herself mixed up in one of those expeditions that she had until then represented as chivalrous feats of arms, and these by-ways of brigandage filled her with horror.

“But they are a band of rascals,” she said to Lanoë, and she insisted on his taking her away; she was obliged to pass through the inn filled with men drinking. At last, outside, without turning round she went to the Hôtel des Trois Marchands, opposite Notre-Dame, where she usually stayed.

Mme. Acquet had no such qualms; she supped with the men, and in the night had a mysterious interview with Allan behind the walls of Notre-Dame. Where Mme. Acquet slept that night is not known; she only appeared at the Hôtel des Trois Marchands four days later, where she met Mme. de Combray who had just returned from Bayeux. In her need of comfort the Marquise had tried to see d’Aché and find out if it were true that Allain had acted according to his orders, but d’Aché had assured his old friend that he disapproved of such vile deeds, and that “he was still worthy of her esteem.” She had returned to Caen much grieved at having allowed herself to be deceived by her daughter and the lawyer; she told them nothing of her visit to Bayeux, except that she had not seen d’Aché and that he was still in England; then, quite put out, she returned to Falaise in the coach, not wanting to travel with her daughter. Mme. Acquet, the same day,—Thursday the 23d July—took a carriage that ran from Caen to Harcourt and got



down at Forge-à-Cambro where Lanoë, who had returned to Donnay on Monday, was waiting, with his waggon.

As soon as she was seated Lanoë informed her that the gendarmes had gone to Donnay and searched the Buquets' house, but left without arresting any one; "a man in a long black coat was conducting them." Mme. Acquet asked several questions, then told Lanoë to whip up the horses and remained silent until they reached La Bijude; he observed her with the corner of his eye, and saw that she was very pale. When they arrived at the village she went immediately to the Buquets and remained a quarter of an hour closeted with Joseph. No doubt she was making a supreme effort to get some money from him; she reappeared with heightened colour and very excited. "Quick, to Falaise," she said. But Lanoë told her he had something to do at home, and that his horse could not be always on the go. But she worried him until he consented to take her.

While the horse was being fed Mme. Acquet went to La Bijude and threw herself on the bed, fully dressed. The day had been very heavy and towards evening lightning flashed brightly. About two in the morning Lanoë knocked on the window and Mme. Acquet appeared, ready to start. She got up behind him, and they took the road by the forest of Saint-Clair and Bonnœil, and when they were going through the wood the storm burst with extraordinary violence, huge gusts bent the trees, breaking the branches, the rain fell in torrents, changing the road



to a river; the horse still advanced however, but towards day, when approaching the village of Noron, Mme. Acquet suddenly felt such violent indisposition that she fell to the ground in a faint. Lanoë laid her on the side of the road in the mud. When she came to herself she begged him to leave her there, and hasten to Falaise and bring back Lefebvre; she seemed to be haunted by the thought of the man in the black overcoat who had guided the gendarmes at Donnay. Lanoë, in a great fright, obeyed, but Lefebvre could not come before afternoon; at Noron they found Mme. Acquet in an inn to which she had dragged herself. The poor woman was in a fever, and almost raving she told Lefebvre that she had no money to give him; that the gendarmes had been to Donnay; that the man who showed them the way was probably one of Allain's companions, but that she feared nothing and was going there to bring back the money.

Lefebvre tried to calm her, but when he left after half an hour's talk, she tried Lanoë, begging him to take her back to Donnay; he resisted strongly, not wanting to hear any more of the affair, but at last he softened at her despair, but swore that now he had had enough of it, and would leave her at La Bijude. She agreed to all, climbed on the horse, and taking Lanoë round the waist as before, her dripping garments clinging to her shivering form, she started again for Donnay. When passing Villeneuve, a farm belonging to her brother Bonnœil she saw a group of women gesticulating excitedly; the farmer Truffault

came up and in response to her anxious enquiries, replied :

“A misfortune has taken place; the gendarmes have been to the Buquets, and taken the father, mother and eldest son. Joseph, who hid himself, is alone and very unhappy.”

The farmer added that he had just sent his boy to Falaise to inform Mme. de Combray of the event. Mme. Acquet got off her horse, drew Truffault aside and questioned him in a low voice. When she returned to Lanoë she was as white as a wax candle. “I am lost,” she said, “Joseph Buquet will denounce me.”

Then, with a steady look, speaking to herself: “I could also, in my turn denounce Allain, seeing that he is an outlaw, but where should I say I had met him?” She seemed most uneasy, not knowing what to do. Then she hinted that she must go back to Falaise. But Lanoë was inflexible, he swore he would go no further, and that she could apply to the farmer if she wanted to. And giving his horse the rein he went off at a trot, leaving her surrounded by the peasants, who silently gazed in wondering consternation at the daughter of “their lady” covered with mud, wild-eyed, her arms swinging and her whole appearance so hopeless and forlorn as to awaken pity in the hardest heart.

The same evening the lawyer Lefebvre, learned on reaching home, that Mme. de Combray had sent her gardener to ask him to come to her immediately in the Rue du Tripot. But worn out, he threw him-

self on his bed and slept soundly till some one knocked at his door about one in the morning. It was the gardener again, who was so insistent that Lefebre decided to go with him in spite of fatigue. He found the Marquise wild with anxiety. Truffault's boy had told her of the arrest of the Buquets, and she had not gone to bed, expecting to see the gendarmes appear; her only idea was to fly to Tournebut and hide herself there with her daughter; she begged the lawyer to accompany them, and while excitedly talking, tied a woollen shawl round her head. Lefebre, who was calmer, told her that he had left Mme. Acquet at Noron in a state of exhaustion, that they must wait until she was in a condition to travel before starting, and that it would be impossible to obtain a carriage at this time of night. But Mme. de Combray would listen to nothing; she gave her gardener three crowns to go to Noron and tell Mme. Acquet that she must start immediately for Tournebut by Saint-Sylvain and Lisieux; then traversing the deserted streets with Lefebre, who stopped at his house to get the three thousand francs, from the robbery of June 7th, she reached the Val d'Ante and took the road to Caen.

It was very dark; the storm had ceased but the rain still fell heavily. The old Marquise continued her journey over the flooded roads, defying fatigue and only stopping occasionally to make sure she was not followed. Lefebre, now afraid also, hastened his steps beside her, bending beneath the weight of his portmanteau filled with crowns. Neither spoke.

The endless road was the same one taken by the waggon containing the Alençon money on the day of the robbery, and the remembrance of this rendered their wild night march still more tragic.

It was scarcely dawn when the fugitives crossed the wood of Quesnay; at Langannerie they left the highroad and crossed by Bretteville-le-Rabet. It was now broad daylight, barns were opening, and people looked astonished at this strange couple who seemed to have been walking all night; the Marquise especially puzzled them, with her hair clinging to her cheeks, her skirts soaked and her slippers covered with mud. But no one dared question them.

At six in the morning Mme. de Combray and her companion arrived at Saint-Sylvain, five good leagues from Falaise. If Mme. Acquet had succeeded in leaving Noron they ought to meet her there. Lefebvre enquired at the inn, but no one had been there. They waited for two hours which the lawyer employed in seeking a waggon to go on to Lisieux. A peasant agreed to take them for fifteen francs paid in advance, and about eight o'clock, as Mme. Acquet had not arrived they decided to start. They stopped at Croissanville a little further on, and while breakfasting, Lefebvre wrote to Lanoë telling him to find Mme. Acquet at once and tell her to hasten to her mother at Tournebut.

The rest of the journey was uneventful. They reached Lisieux at supper-time and slept there. The next day Mme. de Combray took two places under an assumed name, in the coach for Evreux, where they

arrived in the evening. The fugitives had a refuge in the Rue de l'Union with an old Chouan named Vergne, who had been in orders before the Revolution, but had become a doctor since the pacification. Next day Mme. de Combray and Lefebvre made five leagues from Evreux to Louviers; they got out before entering the town as the Marquise wished to avoid the Hôtel du Mouton where she was known. They went by side streets to the bridge of the Eure where they hired a carriage which took them by nightfall to the hamlet of Val-Tesson. They were now only a league from Tournebut which they could reach by going through the woods. . But would they not find gendarmes there? Mme. de Combray's flight might have aroused suspicion at Falaise, Caen and Bayeux, and brought police supervision to her house. It was nine in the evening when, after an hour's walk, she reached the Hermitage. She thought it prudent to send Lefebvre on ahead, and accompanied him to the gate where she left him to venture in alone. All appeared tranquil in the château, the lawyer went into the kitchen where he found a scullery maid who called Soyer, the confidential man, and Mme. de Combray only felt safe when she saw the latter himself come to open a door into the garden; she then slipped, without being seen, into her own room.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE YELLOW HORSE

THE man in the "black overcoat" who had conducted the gendarmes on their visit to Donnay, was no other than "Grand-Charles," one of Allain's followers. He had been arrested at Le Chalance on July 14th, and had consented without hesitation, to show the spot in the Buquets' garden where the money had been hidden. He recognised the position of the house and garden, the room in which Allain and his companions had been received on the night of the robbery, and even the glass which Mme. Buquet had filled for him. At the bottom of the garden traces of the excavation that had contained the money were found; the loft contained linen, and other effects of Mme. Acquet; her miniature was hanging on the wall of Joseph's room. Joseph alone had fled; his father, mother, and brother were taken to prison in Caen the same evening.

"Grand-Charles," who did not want to be the only one compromised, showed the greatest zeal in searching for his accomplices. As Querelle had done before, he led Manginot and his thirty gendarmes over all the country, until they reached the village of Mancellière, which passed as the most famous resort of malcontents in a circuit of twenty

leagues. As in the happiest days of the Chouan revolt, there were bloody combats between the gendarmes and the deserters. After one of these engagements Pierre-François Harel,—who had passed most of his time since the Quesnay robbery in a barrel sunk in the earth at the bottom of a garden—was arrested in the house of a M. Lebougne, where he had gone to get some brandy and salt to dress a wound. But Manginot made a more important capture in Flierlé, who was living peacefully at Amayé-sur-Orne, with one of his old captains, Rouault des Vaux. Flierlé told his story as soon as he was interrogated; he knew that “high personages” were in the plot, and thought they would think twice before pushing things to an issue.

If Manginot was thus acting with an energy worthy of praise, he received none from Caffarelli, who was distressed at the turn affairs had taken, and wished that the affair of Quesnay might be reduced to the proportions of a simple incident. He interrogated the prisoners with the reserve and precaution of a man who was interfering in what did not concern him, and if he learned from Flierlé much that he would rather not have known about the persistent organisation of the Chouans in Calvados, he could get no information concerning the deed that had led to his arrest.

The German did not conceal his fear of assassination if he should speak, Allain having promised, on June 8th, at the bridge of Landelle, “poison, or pistol shot to the first who should reveal anything,

and the assistance of two hundred determined men to save those who showed discretion, from the vengeance of Bonaparte."

Things were different in Paris. The police were working hard, and Fouché was daily informed of the slightest details bearing on the events that were taking place in Lower Normandy. For several weeks detectives had been watching a young man who arrived in Paris the second fortnight of May; he was often seen in the Palais-Royal, and called himself openly "General of the Chouans," and assumed great importance. The next report gave his name as Le Chevalier, from Caen, and more information was demanded of Caffarelli. The Prefect of Calvados replied that the description tallied with that of a man who had often been denounced to him as an incorrigible royalist; he was easy to recognise as he had lost the use of his left arm.

The police received orders not to lose sight of this person. He lived at the Hôtel de Beauvais, Rue des Vieux-Augustins, a house that had been known since the Revolution as the resort of royalists passing through Paris. Le Chevalier went out a great deal; he dined in town nearly every night, with people of good position. He was followed for a fortnight; then the order for his arrest was given, and on July 15th he was taken, handcuffed, to the prefecture of police and accused of participation in the robbery at Quesnay.

Le Chevalier was not the man to be caught napping. His looks, his manner and his eloquence had

got him out of so many scrapes, that he doubted not they would once more save his life. The letter he wrote to Réal on the day of his arrest is so characteristic of him—at once familiar and haughty—that it would be a pity not to quote it :

“Arrested on a suspicion of brigandage, of which it is as important to justify myself as painful to have to do it, but full of confidence in my honour, which is unimpeachable, and in the well-known justice of your character, I beg you to grant me a few minutes’ audience, during which—being well disposed to answer your questions, and even to forestall them—I flatter myself that I can convince you that the condition of my affairs and, above all, my whole conduct in life, raise me above any suspicion of brigandage whatever. I hope also, Monsieur, that this conversation, the favour of which your justice will accord me, will convince you that I am not mad enough to engage in political brigandage, or to engage in a struggle with the government to which the proudest sovereigns have yielded. . . .

“A. LE CHEVALIER.”

And to prove that he had taken no part in the robbery of June 7th, he added to his letter twenty affirmations of honourable and well-known persons who had either seen or dined with him in Paris each day of the month from the 1st to the 20th. Among these were the names of his compatriot, the poet Chênedollé, and Dr. Dupuytren whom he had consulted on the advisability of amputating the fingers of his left hand, long useless. He had even taken care to be seen at the Te Deum sung in Notre-Dame for

the taking of Dantzic. His precautions had been well taken, and once again his aplomb was about to save him, when Réal, much embarrassed by this soft spoken prisoner, thought of sending him to Caen, in the hope that confronting him with Flierlé, Grand-Charles and the Buquets might have some result. Caffarelli was convinced that Le Chevalier was the leader in the plot, yet they had searched carefully in his house in the Rue Saint-Sauveur; without finding anything but some private papers. Flierlé had recognised him as the man to whom he acted as secretary and courier, yet Le Chevalier had contemptuously replied that "the German was not the sort to be his servant, and that their only connection was that of benefactor and recipient." It was out of the question that any tribunal could be found to condemn a man who on the day of the crime had been sixty leagues from the place where it was committed. As to convicting him as a royalist who approved of the theft of public funds—they might as well do the same with all Normandy. Besides, to Caffarelli, who had no allusions as to the sentiments of the district, and who was always in fear of a new Chouan explosion, the presence of Le Chevalier in prison at Caen was a perpetual nightmare. Allain might suddenly appear with an army, and make an attempt to carry off his chief similar to that which, under the Directory, saved the lives of the Vicomte de Chambray and Chevalier Destouches, to the amusement and delight of the whole province. And this is why the prudent prefect, not caring to encumber himself with



such a compromising prisoner, in four days, obtained Réal's permission to send him back to Paris, where he was confined in the Temple. Ah ! What a fine letter he wrote to the Chief of Police, as soon as he arrived there, and how he posed as the unlucky rival of Napoleon !

This profession of faith is too long to be given entirely, but it throws such light on the character of the writer, and on the illusions which the royalists obstinately fostered during the most brilliant period of the imperial régime, that a few extracts are indispensable.

"You wished to know the truth concerning the declarations of Flierlé on my account, and on the projects that he divulged. I will tell you of them. Denial suits well a criminal who fears the eye of justice, but it is foreign to a character that fears nothing and to whom the first success of his enterprises lies in the esteem of his enemies.

"Your Excellency will kindly see in me neither a man trembling at death, nor a mind seduced by the hope of reward. I ask nothing to tell what I think, for in telling it I satisfy myself. I planned an insurrection against Napoleon's government, I desired his ruin, if I have not been able to effect it, it is because I have always been badly seconded and often betrayed.

"What were my means of entertaining at least the hope of success ? Not wishing to appear absolutely mad in your eyes, I am going to make them known ; but not wishing to betray the confidence of those who would have served me, I shall withhold the details.

"I was born generous, and a lover of glory. After the amnesty of the year VIII I was the richest among

my comrades : my money, well dispensed, procured me followers. For several years I watched for a favourable moment to revolt. The last campaign in Austria offered this occasion. Every one in the West believed in the defection of the French armies ; I did not believe in it, but was going to profit by the general opinion. Victory came too quickly, and I had hardly time to plan anything.

“After having established connections in several departments, I left for Paris. There, all concurred in fortifying my hopes. Many republicans shared my wishes ; I negotiated with them for a reunion of parties, to make action more certain and reaction less strong. The movement must take place in the capital, a provisional government must be established,—all France would have passed through a new régime before the Emperor returned.

“But it did not take me long to discover that the republicans had not all the means they boasted. . . . I returned to the royalists in the capital ; they were disunited and without plans. I had only a few men in Paris ; I abandoned my designs there, and returned to the provinces. There I could collect two or three thousand men, and as soon as I had done that I should have sent to ask the Bourbon princes to put themselves at the head of my troops. . . .

“But at the opening of the second campaign my plans were postponed. However, the measures I had been obliged to take could not remain secret. Some refractory conscripts, some deserters, appeared armed, at different places ; they had to be maintained, and without an order *ad hoc*, but by virtue of general instructions, one of my officers possessed himself of the public funds for the purpose. . . . The guilty ones are . . . myself, for whom I ask nothing, not from pride, for the haughtiest spirit need

not feel humiliated at receiving grace from one who has granted it to kings, but from honour. Your Excellency will no doubt wish to know the motive that urged me to conceive and nourish such projects. The motive is this: I have seen the unhappiness of the amnestied, and my own misfortune; people proscribed in the state, classed as serfs, excluded not only from all employment, but also tyrannised by those who formerly only lacked the courage to join their cause. . . .

“Whatever fate is reserved for me, I beg you to consider that I have not ceased to be a Frenchman, that I may have succumbed to noble madness, but have not sought cowardly success; and I hope that, in view of this, your Excellency will grant me the only favour I ask for myself—that my trial, if I am to have one, may be military, as well as its execution. . . .

“A. LE CHEVALIER.”

One can imagine the stupefaction, on reading this missive of Fouché, of Réal, Desmarets, Veyrat, and of all those on whom it rested to make his people appear to the Master as enthusiastic and contented, or at least silent and submissive. They felt that the letter was not all bragging; they saw in it Georges' plan amplified; the same threat of a descent of Bourbons on the coast, the same assurance of overturning, by a blow at Bonaparte, the immense edifice he had erected. In fact, the belief that the Empire, to which all Europe now seemed subjugated, was at the mercy of a battle won or lost, was so firmly established in the mind of the population, that even a man like Fouché, for example, who thoroughly understood the under-

currents of opinion, could never believe in the solidity of the régime that he worked for. Were not the germs of the whole story of the Restoration in Le Chevalier's profession of faith? Were they not found again, five years later, in the astonishing conception of Malet? Were things very different in 1814? The Emperor vanquished, the defection of the generals, the descent of the princes, the intervention of a provisional government, the reestablishment of the monarchy, such were, in reality the events that followed; they were what Georges had foreseen, what d'Aché had anticipated, what Le Chevalier had divined with such clear-sightedness. Though they seemed miraculous to many people they were simply the logical result of continued effort, the success of a conspiracy in which the actors had frequently been changed, but which had suffered no cessation from the coup d'état of Brumaire until the abdication at Fontainebleau. The chiefs of the imperial police, then, found themselves confronted by a new "affaire Georges." From Flierlé's partial revelations and the little that had been learned from the Buquets, they inferred that d'Aché was at the head of it, and recommended all the authorities to search well, but quietly. In spite of these exhortations, Caffarelli seemed to lose all interest in the plot, which he had finally analysed as "vast but mad," and unworthy of any further attention on his part.

The prefect of the Seine-Inférieure, Savoye-Rollin, had manifested a zeal and ardour each time that Réal addressed him on the subject of the affair of Quesnay,



in singular contrast with the indifference shown by his colleague of Calvados. Savoye-Rollin belonged to an old parliamentary family. Being advocate-general to the parliament of Grenoble before 1790, he had adopted the more moderate ideas of the Revolution, and had been made a member of the tribunate on the eighteenth Brumaire in 1806, at the age of fifty-two, he replaced Beugnot in the prefecture of Rouen. He was a most worthy functionary, a distinguished worker, and possessor of a fine fortune.

Réal left it to Savoye-Rollin to find d'Aché, who, they remembered, had lived at the farm of Saint-Clair near Gournay, before Georges' disembarkation, and who possessed some property in the vicinity of Neufchâtel. The police of Rouen was neither better organised nor more numerous than that of Caen, but its chief was a singular personage whose activity made up for the qualities lacking in his men. He was a little, restless, shrewd, clever man, full of imagination and wit, frank with every one and fearing, as he himself said, "neither woman, God nor devil." He was named Licquet, and in 1807 was fifty-three years old. At the time of the Revolution he had been keeper of the rivers and forests of Caudebec, which position he had resigned in 1790 for a post in the municipal administration at Rouen. In the year IV he was chief of the Bureau of Public Instruction, but in reality he alone did all the work of the mayoralty, and also some of that of the Department, and did it so well that he found himself, in 1802, in the post of secretary-in-chief of the municipality. In this capacity he



gave and inspected all passports. For five years past no one had been able to travel in the Seine-Inférieure without going through his office. As he had a good memory and his business interested him, he had a very clear recollection of all whom he had scrutinised and passed. He remembered very well having signed the passport that took d'Aché from Gournay to Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 1803, and retained a good idea of the robust man, tall, with a high forehead and black hair. He remembered, moreover, that d'Aché's "toe-nails were so grown into his flesh that he walked on them."

Since this meeting with d'Aché, Licquet's appointments had increased considerably; while retaining his place as secretary-general, he had obtained the directorship of police, and fulfilled his functions with so much energy, authority and cunning that no one dreamt of criticising his encroachments. He was, besides, much feared for his bitter tongue, but he pleased the prefect, who liked his wit and appreciated his cleverness. From the beginning Licquet was fascinated by the idea of discovering the elusive conspirator and thus demonstrating his adroitness to the police of Paris; and his satisfaction was profound, when, on the 17th of August, 1807, three days after having arranged a plan of campaign and issued instructions to his subordinates, he was informed that M. d'Aché was confined in the Conciergerie of the Palais de Justice. He rushed to the Palais and ordered the prisoner to be brought before him. It was "Tourlour," d'Aché's inoffensive brother Placide, arrested at Saint-

Denis-du-Bosguérard, where he had gone to visit his old mother. Licquet's disappointment was cruel, for he had nothing to expect from Tourlour; but to hide his chagrin he questioned him about his brother (whom Placide declared he had not seen for four years) and how he passed his time, which was spent, said Tourlour, when he was not in the Rue Saint-Patrice, between Saint-Denis-du-Bosguérard and Mme. de Combray's château near Gaillon. Placide declared that he only desired to live in peace, and to care for his aged and infirm mother. This was the second time Licquet's attention had been attracted by the name of Mme. de Combray. He had already read it, incidentally, in the report of Flierlé's examination, and with the instinct of a detective, for whom a single word will often unravel a whole plot, he had a sudden intuition that in it lay the key to the entire affair. Tourlour's imprudent admission, which was to bring terrible catastrophes on Mme. de Combray's head, gave Licquet a thread that was to lead him through the maze that Caffarelli had refused to enter.

Nearly a month earlier, Mme. de Combray had expressly forbidden Soyer to talk about her return with Lefebre. She had shut herself up in her room with Catherine Querey, her chambermaid; the lawyer had shared Bonnœil's room. Next day, Tuesday, July 28th, the Marquise had shown Lefebre the apartments prepared for the King and the hiding-places in the great château; Bonnœil showed him copies of d'Aché's manifesto, and the Duc d'Enghien's funeral oration, which they read, with deep respect,

after dinner. Towards evening Soyer announced the postmaster of Gaillon, a friend who had often rendered valuable services to the people at Tournebut. He had just heard that the commandant had received orders from Paris to search the château, and would do so immediately. Mme. de Combray was not at all disturbed; she had long been prepared for this, and ordered Soyer to take some provisions to the little château, where she repaired that night with Lefebre. There were two comfortable hiding-places there whose mechanism she explained to the lawyer. One of them was large enough to contain two mattresses side by side; she showed Lefebre in, slipped after him, and shut the panels upon them both. Bonnœil remained alone at Tournebut. The quiet life he had led for the last two years removed him from any suspicion, and he prepared to receive the gendarmes who appeared at dawn on Friday. The commandant showed his order, and Bonnœil, confident of the issue, and completely cool, opened all the doors and gave up the keys. The soldiers rummaged the château from top to bottom. Nothing could have been more innocent than the appearance of this great mansion, most of whose apartments seemed to have been long unoccupied, and Bonnœil stated that his mother had gone a fortnight ago to Lower Normandy, where she went every year about this time to collect her rents and visit her property near Falaise. When the servants were interrogated they were all unanimous in declaring that with the exception of Soyer and Mlle. Querey, they had seen the Marquise start for Falaise,

and did not know of her return. The commandant returned to Gaillon with his men, little suspecting that the woman he was looking for was calmly playing cards with one of her accomplices a few steps away, while they were searching her house.

She lived with her guest for eight days in this house with the false bottom, so to speak, never appearing outside, wandering through the unfurnished rooms during the day, and returning to her hiding-place at night.

They did not return to Tournebut till August 4th. The same day Soyer received a letter from Mme. Acquet, on the envelope of which she had written, "For Mama." It was an answer to the letter sent to Croissanville by Lefebre. Mme. Acquet said that her mother's departure did her a great wrong, but that all danger was over and Lefebre could return to Falaise without fear. As for herself, she had found refuge with a reliable person; the Abbé Moraud, vicar of Guibray, would take charge of her correspondence. Of the proposal which had been made her to take refuge at Tournebut, not a word. Evidently Mme. Acquet preferred the retreat she had chosen for herself—where, she did not say. Mme. de Combray, either hurt at this unjustifiable defiance, or afraid that she would prove herself an accomplice in the theft if she did not separate herself entirely from Mme. Acquet, made her maid reply that it was "too late for her to come now, that she was very ill and could receive no one." And thus the feeling that divided these two women was clearly defined.



Lefebvre undertook to give the letter to Abbé Moraud; he was in a great hurry to return to Falaise, where he felt much safer than at Tournebut. He left the same day, after having chosen a yellow horse from the stables of the château. He put on top-boots and an overcoat belonging to Bonnœil, and left by a little door in the wall of the park. Soyer led him as far as the Moulin des Quatre-Vents on the highroad. Lefebvre took the Neubourg road so as to avoid Evreux and Louviers. Two days after, he breakfasted at Glatigny with Lanoë, leaving there his boots, overcoat, and the yellow horse, and started gaily for Falaise, where he arrived in the evening. He saw Mme. Acquet on the 7th, and found her completely at her ease.

When Lanoë had abandoned her at the farm of Villeneuve, twelve days before, Mme. Acquet had entreated so pitifully that a woman who was there had gone to fetch Collin, one of the servants at La Bijude; Mme. de Combray's daughter had returned with him to Falaise, on one of the farmer's horses. She dared not go to the house in the Rue du Tripot, and therefore stopped with an honest woman named Chauvel, who did the washing for the Combray family. She was drawn there by the fact that the son, Victor Chauvel, was one of the gendarmes who had been at Donnay the night before, and she wanted to find out from him if the Buquets had denounced her.

She went to the Chauvels' under pretence of getting Captain Manginot's address. The gendarme was



at supper. He was a man of thirty-six, an old hussar, and a good fellow, but although married and the father of three children, known as a "gadger, and fond of the sex." "When women are around, Chauvel forgets everything," his comrades used to say. He now saw Mme. Acquet for the first time, and to her questions replied that her name had indeed been mentioned, and that Manginot, who was at the "Grand-Ture," was looking for her. The young woman began to cry. She implored Mme. Chauvel to keep her, promised to pay her, and appealed to her pity, so that the washerwoman was touched. She had an attic in the third story, some bedding was thrown on the floor, and from that place Mme. Acquet wrote to tell her mother that she had found a safe retreat.

It was very safe indeed, and one can understand that she did not feel the need of telling too precisely the conditions of the hospitality she was given. Is it necessary to insist on the sort of relations established from the moment of her arrival at the Chauvels, between the poor woman whose fear of capture killed every other feeling and the soldier on whom her fate depended? Chauvel had only to say one word to insure her arrest; she yielded to him, he held his tongue and the existence which then began for them both was so miserable and so tragic that it excites more pity than disgust. Mme. Acquet had only one thought—to escape the scaffold; Chauvel had only one wish—to keep this unexpected mistress, more dear because he sacrificed for her his career, his honour and perhaps his life. At first things went calmly

enough. No warrant had been issued for the fugitive, and in the evening she used to go out disguised with Chauvel. Soon she grew bolder and walked in broad daylight in the streets of Falaise. On the 15th of August Lefebvre had Lanoë to breakfast and invited her also; they talked freely, and Mme. Acquet made no secret of the fact that she was living with the Chauvels and that the son kept her informed of all orders received from Caen or Paris. Lefebvre led the conversation round to the "treasure," for the money hidden at the Buquets had excited much cupidity. Bureau de Placène, as "banker" to the Chouans, had advanced the claims of the royal exchequer; Allain and Lerouge the baker—who showed entire disinterestedness—had gone to Donnay, and with great trouble got 1,200 francs from the Buquets; five times Lerouge had gone in a little cart, by appointment, to the forest of Harcourt, where he waited under a large tree near the crossroad till Buquet brought him some money. In this way Placène received 12,000 francs in crowns, "so coated with mud that his wife was obliged to wash them." But Joseph's relations, who had been arrested when he fled, swore that he alone knew where the rest of the money was buried, and no one could get any more of it.

While at breakfast with the lawyer and Lanoë Mme. Acquet begged the latter to undertake a search. She believed the money was buried in the field of buckwheat between the Buquets' house and the walls of the château, and wanted Lanoë to dig there, but he refused. She seemed to have lost her head com-

pletely. She planned to throw herself at the Emperor's feet imploring his pardon; she talked of recovering the stolen money, returning it to the government, adding to it her "dot," and leaving France forever. When she returned in the evening greatly excited, she told the washerwoman of her plans; she dwelt on the idea for three days, and thought she had only to restore the stolen money to guarantee herself against punishment.

Chauvel was on duty. When he returned on the 19th he brought some news. Caffarelli was to arrive in Falaise the next day, to interrogate Mme. Acquet. The night passed in tears and agony. The poor woman attempted suicide, and Chauvel seized the poison she was about to swallow. An obscure point is reached here. Even if Caffarelli's ease and indifference are admitted, it is hard to believe that he was an active accomplice in the plot; but on the other hand, it is surprising that Mme. Acquet did not fly as soon as she heard of his intended visit, and that she consented to appear before him as if she were sure of finding help and protection. The interview took place in the house of the mayor, M. de Saint-Léonard, a relative of Mme. de Combray's, and resembled a family council rather than an examination. Caffarelli was more paternal than his rôle of judge warranted, and it was long believed in the family that Mme. de Combray's remote relationship with the Empress Josephine's family, which they had been careful not to boast of before, was drawn upon to soften the susceptible prefect. Whatever the reason,

Mme. Acquet left the mayor's completely reassured, told Mme. Chauvel that she was going away, and took many messages from the good woman to Mme. de Combray, with whom she said she was going to spend several days at Tournebut. On the 22d she made a bundle of her belongings, and taking the arm of the gendarme, left the washerwoman's house disguised as a peasant.

Life at Tournebut resumed its usual course after Lefebvre's departure. Mme. de Combray, satisfied that her daughter was safe, and that the prefect of Calvados even if he suspected her, would never venture to cause her arrest, went fearlessly among her neighbours. She was not aware that the enquiry had passed from Caffarelli's hands into those of the prefect of Rouen, and was now managed by a man whose malignity and stubbornness would not be easily discouraged.

Licquet had taken a fortnight to study the affair. His only clues were Flierlé's ambiguous replies and the Buquets' cautious confessions, but during the years that he had eagerly devoted to detective work as an amateur, he had laid up a good store of suspicions. The failure of the gendarmes at Tournebut had convinced him that this old manor-house, so peaceful of aspect, hid terrible secrets, and that its occupants had arranged within it inaccessible retreats. Then he changed his tactics. Mme. de Combray and Bonnœil had gone in perfect confidence to spend the afternoon at Gaillon; when they returned to Tournebut in the evening they were suddenly stopped



by a detachment of gendarmes posted across the road. They were obliged to give their names; the officer showed a warrant, and they all returned to the château, which was occupied by soldiers. The Marquise protested indignantly against the invasion of her house, but was forced to be present at a search that was begun immediately and lasted all the evening. Towards midnight she and her son were put into a carriage with two gendarmes and taken under escort to Rouen, where, at dawn, they were thrown into the Conciergerie of the Palais de Justice.

Licquet was only half satisfied with the result of the expedition; he had hoped to take d'Aché, whom he believed to be hidden at Tournebut; the police had arrested Mme. Levasseur and Jean-Baptiste Caqueray, lately married to Louise d'Aché; but of the conspirator himself there was no trace. For three years this extraordinary man had eluded the police. Was it to be believed that he had lived all this time, buried in some oubliette at Tournebut, and could one expect that Mme. de Combray would reveal the secret of his retreat?

As soon as she arrived at the Conciergerie, Licquet, without showing himself, had gone to "study" his prisoner. Like an old, caged lioness, this woman of sixty-seven behaved with surprising energy; she showed no evidence of depression or shame; she did as she liked in the prison, complained of the food, grumbled all day, and raged at the gaolers. There was no reason to hope that she would belie her character, nor to count on an emotion she did not feel to obtain



any information from her. The prefect had her brought in a carriage to his house on August 23d, and interrogated her for two days. With the experience and astuteness of an old offender, the Marquise assumed complete frankness; but she only confessed to things she could not deny with success. Licquet asked several questions; she did not reply until she had caused them to be repeated several times, under pretence that she did not understand them. She struggled desperately, arguing, quibbling, fighting foot by foot. If she admitted knowing d'Aché and having frequently offered him hospitality, she positively denied all knowledge of his actual residence. In short, when Savoye-Rollin and Licquet sent her back to the Conciergerie, they felt that they had had the worst of it and gained nothing. Bonnœil, when his turn came told them nothing but what they already knew, and Placide d'Aché flew into a rage and denied everything.

The prefect and his acolyte were feeling somewhat abashed at their failure, when the concierge who had taken Mme. de Combray back to the Palais asked to speak to them. He told them that in the carriage the Marquise had offered him a large sum if he would take some letters to one of the prisoners. Accustomed to these requests he had said neither yes nor no, but had told "the Combray woman" that he would see her at night, when going the rounds, and he had come to get the prefect's orders concerning this correspondence. Licquet urged that the concierge be authorised to receive the letters. He hoped by inter-

cepting them to learn much from the confidences and advice the Marquise would give her fellow-prisoners. The idea was at first very repugnant to Savoye-Rollin, but the Marquise's proposal seemed to establish her guilt so thoroughly, that he did not feel obliged to be delicate and consented, not without throwing on his secretary-general (one of Licquet's titles) the responsibility for the proceeding. Having obtained this concession Licquet took hold of the enquiry, and found it a good field for the employment of his particular talents. No duel was ever more pitiless; never did a detective show more ingenuity and duplicity. From "love of the art," from sheer delight in it, Licquet worked himself up against his prisoners with a passion that would be inexplicable, did not his letters reveal the intense joy the struggle gave him. He felt no hatred towards his victims, but only a ferocious satisfaction in seeing them fall into the traps he prepared and in unveiling the mysteries of a plot whose political significance seemed entirely indifferent to him.

With the keenest anticipation he awaited the time when Mme. de Combray's letters to Bonnœil and "Tourlour" should be handed to him. He had to be patient till next day, and this first letter told nothing; the Marquise gave her accomplices a sketch of her examination, and did it so artfully that Licquet suspected her of having known that the letter was to pass through his hands. The same day the concierge gave him another letter as insignificant as the first, which, however, ended with this sentence, whose

perusal puzzled Licquet: "Do you not know that Tourlour's brother has burnt the muslin fichu?"

"Tourlour's brother"—that was d'Aché. Had he recently returned to Tournebut? Was he still there? Another letter, given to the gaoler by Bonnœil, answered these questions affirmatively. It was addressed to a man of business named Legrand in the Rue Cauchoise, and ran thus: "I implore you to start at once for Tournebut without telling any one of the object of your journey; go to Grosmenil (the little château), see the woman Bachelet, and burn everything she may have that seems suspicious; you will do us a great service. Return this letter to me. Tell Soyer that if any one asks if M. d'Aché has returned, it is two years since he was seen at Tournebut."

That same evening the order for Soyer's arrest was sent to Gaillon, and twelve hours later he also was in the Conciergerie at Rouen. This did not prevent Bonnœil's writing to him the next day, Licquet, as may be imagined, not having informed the prisoners of his arrest.

"I beg you, my dear Soyer, to look in the two or three desks in my mother's room, and see if you cannot find anything that could compromise her, above all any of M. Delorières' (d'Aché's) writing. Destroy it all. If you are asked how long it is since M. Delorières was at Tournebut, say he has not been there for nearly two years. Tell this to Collin, to Catin, and to the yard girl. . . ."

Licquet carefully copied these letters and then sent

them to their destination, hoping that the answers would give him some light. In his frequent visits to the prisoners he dared not venture on the slightest allusion to the confidences they exchanged, for fear that they might suspect the fidelity of their messenger, and refuse his help. Thus, many points remained obscure to the detective. The next letter from Bonnœil to Soyer contained this sentence: "Put the small curtains on the window of the place where I told you to bury the nail. . . ." We can imagine Licquet with his head in his hands trying to solve this enigma. The muslin fichu, the little curtains, the nail—was this a cipher decided on in advance between the prisoners? And all these precautions seemed to be taken for the mysterious d'Aché whose safety seemed to be their sole desire. A word from Mme. de Combray to Bonnœil leaves no doubt as to the conspirator's recent sojourn at Tournebut: "I wish Mme. K. . . . to go to my house and see with So . . . if Delor . . . has not left some paper in the oil-cloth of the little room near the room where the cooks slept. Let him look everywhere and burn everything." This time the information seemed so sure that Licquet started for Tournebut, which had been occupied by gendarmes for a fortnight; he took Soyer to guide him, and the commissary of police, Legendre, to make a report of the search.

They arrived at Tournebut on the morning of September 5th. Licquet, who was much exhilarated by this hunt for conspirators, must have felt a singular

emotion on approaching the mysterious mansion, object of all his thoughts. He took it all in at a glance; he was struck by the isolation of the château, away from the road below the woods; he found that it could be entered at twenty different places, without one's being seen. He sent away the servants, posted a gendarme at each door, and conducted by Soyer, entered the apartments.

First he went to the brick wing built by de Marillac, where was a vast chamber occupied by Bonnœil and leading to the great hall, astoundingly high and solemn in spite of its dilapidation, with a brick floor, a ceiling with great beams, and immense windows looking over the terrace towards the Seine. By a double door with monumental ironwork, set in a wall as thick as a bastille, Mme. de Combray's apartments were reached, the first room wainscoted, then a boudoir, next a small room hidden by a staircase, and communicating with a lot of other small, low rooms. A long passage, lighted by three windows opening on the terrace, led, leaving the Marquise's bedchamber on the right, to the most ancient part of the château the front of which had been recently restored. Having crossed the landing of the steps leading to the garden, one reached the salon; then the dining-room, where there was a stone staircase leading to the first floor. On this were a long passage and three chambers looking out on the valley of the Seine, and a lot of small rooms that were not used. All the rest was lofts, where the framework of the roofs crossed. When a door was opened, frightened bats flapped



their wings with a great noise in the darkness of this forest of enormous, worm-eaten beams. In fact, everything looked very simple; there was no sign whatever of a hiding-place. The furniture was opened, the walls sounded, and the panels examined without finding any hollow place. It was now Soyer's turn to appear. Whether he feared for himself, or whether Licquet had made him understand that denial was useless, Mme. de Combray's confidential man consented to guide the detectives. He took a bunch of keys and followed by Licquet and Legendre, went up to a little room under the roof of a narrow building next to Marillac's wing. This room had only one window, on the north, with a bit of green stuff for a curtain; its only furniture was a miserable wooden bed drawn into the middle of the room. Licquet and the commissary examined the partitions and had them sounded. Soyer allowed them to rummage in all the corners, then, when they had given up all idea of finding anything themselves, he went up to the bed, put his hand under the mattress and removed a nail. They immediately heard the fall of a weight behind the wall, which opened, disclosing a chamber large enough to hold fifteen persons. In it were a wooden bench, a large chafing-dish, silver candlesticks, a trunk full of papers and letters, two packets of hair of different colours, and some treatises on games. They seized among other things, the funeral oration of the Duc d'Enghien, copied by Placide, and the passport d'Aché had obtained at Rouen in 1803, which was signed by Licquet. When they had put

everything in a bag and closed the partition, when they had sufficiently admired the mechanism which left no crack or opening visible, Soyer, still followed by two policemen, went over the whole château, climbed to the loft, and stopped at last in a little room at the end of the building. It was full of soiled linen hung on ropes; a thick beam was fixed almost level with the ground, the whole length of the wall embellished with shelves supported by brackets. Soyer thrust his hand into a small, worm-eaten hole in the beam, and drawing out a piece of iron, fitted it on a nail that seemed to be driven into one of the brackets. Instantly the shelves folded up, a door opened in the wall, and they entered a room large enough to hold fifty people with ease. A window—impossible to discover from the outside—opened on the roof of the chapel, and gave light and air to this apartment; it contained only a large wardrobe, in which were an earthen dish and an altar stone.

And so this old manor-house, with its venerable and homelike air, was arranged as a resort for brigands, and an arsenal and retreat for a little army of conspirators. For Soyer also revealed the secrets of the *oubliettes* of the little château, whose unfurnished rooms could shelter a considerable garrison; they only found there three trunks full of silver, marked with so many different arms that Licquet believed it must have come from the many thefts perpetrated during the last fifteen years in the neighbourhood. On examination it proved to be nothing of the sort, but that all these different pieces of silver bore the arms

of branches of the families of Brunelle and Combray; but even though he was obliged to withdraw his first supposition, Licquet was firm in attributing to the owners of Tournebut all the misdeeds that had been committed in the region since the Directory. These perfect hiding-places, this château on the banks of the river, in the woods between two roads, like the rocky nests in which the robber-chiefs of the middle ages fortified themselves, explained so well the attacks on the coaches, the bands of brigands who disappeared suddenly, and remained undiscoverable, that the detective gave free rein to his imagination. He persuaded himself that d'Aché was there, buried in some hollow wall of which even Soyer had not the secret, and as the only hope, in this event, was to starve him out, Licquet sent all of Mme. de Combray's servants away, and left a handful of soldiers in the château, the keys of which, as well as the administration of the property, he left in the hands of the mayor of Aubevoye.

His first thought on returning to Rouen was for his prisoners. They had continued to correspond during his absence, and copies of all their letters were faithfully delivered to him; but they seemed to have told each other all they had that was interesting to tell, and the correspondence threatened to become monotonous. The imagination of the detective found a way of reawakening the interest. One evening, when every one was asleep in the prison, Licquet gave the gaoler orders to open several doors hastily, to push bolts, and walk about noisily in the

corridors, and when, next day, Mme. de Combray enquired the cause of all this hubbub, she was easily induced to believe that Lefebre had been arrested at Falaise and imprisoned during the night. An hour later the concierge, with a great show of secrecy, gave the Marquise a note written by Licquet, in which "Lefebre" informed her of his arrest, and said that he had disguised his writing as an act of prudence. The stratagem was entirely successful. Mme. de Combray answered, and her letter was immediately given to Licquet, who, awaiting some definite information, was astonished to find himself confronted with a fresh mystery. "Let me know," said the Marquise, "how the horse went back; that no one saw it anywhere."

What horse? What answer should he give? If Lefebre had been really in prison, it would have been possible to give a sensible reply, but without his help how could Licquet avoid awakening her suspicions as to the personality of her correspondent? In the rôle of the lawyer he wrote a few lines, avoiding any mention of the horse, and asking how the examinations went off. To this the Marquise replied: "The prefect and a bad fellow examined us. But you do not tell me if the horse has been sent back, and by whom. If they asked me, what should I say?"

The "bad fellow" was Licquet himself, and he knew it; but this time he must answer. Hoping that chance would favour him, he adopted an expedient to gain time. He let Mme. de Combray hear that

Lefebvre had fainted during an examination, and was not in a condition to write. But she did not slacken her correspondence, and wrote several letters daily to the lawyer, which greatly increased Licquet's perplexity :

"Tell me what has become of my yellow horse. The police are still at Tournebut; now if they hear about the horse—you can guess the rest. Be smart enough to say that you sold it at the fair at Rouen. Little Licquet is sharp and clever, but he often lies. My only worry is the horse; they will soon have the clue. My hand trembles; can you read this? If I hear anything about the horse I will let you know at once, but just now I know nothing. Don't worry about the saddle and bridle. They were sent to Deslorières, who told me he had received them."

This yellow horse assumed gigantic proportions in Licquet's imagination; it haunted him day and night, and galloped through all his nightmares. A fresh search at Tournebut proved that the stables contained only a small donkey and four horses, instead of the usual five, and the peasants said that the missing beast was "reddish, inclining to yellow." As the detective sent Réal all of Mme. de Combray's letters in his daily budget, they were just as much agitated in Paris over this mysterious animal, whose discovery was, as the Marquise said, the clue to the whole affair. Whom had this horse drawn or carried? One of the Bourbon princes, perhaps? D'Aché? Mme. Acquet, whom they were vainly seeking throughout Normandy? Licquet was obliged to con-



fess to his chiefs that he did not know to what occurrence the story of the horse referred. He felt that the weight attached by Mme. de Combray to its return, increased the importance of knowing what it had been used for. "This is the main point," he said; "the horse, the saddle and bridle must be found."

In the absence of Lefebvre, who could have solved the enigma, and whom Caffarelli had not decided to arrest, there remained one way of discovering Mme. de Combray's secret—an odious way, it is true, but one that Licquet, in his bewilderment, did not hesitate to employ. This was to put a spy with her, who would make her speak. There was in the Conciergerie at Rouen a woman named Delaitre, who had been there for six years. This woman was employed in the infirmary; she had good enough manners, expressed herself well, and was about the same age as Mme. Acquet. It was easy to believe that, in return for some remission of her sentence, she would act as Licquet's spy. They spoke of her to the Marquise, taking care to represent her as a royalist, persecuted for her opinions. The Marquise expressed a wish to see her; Delaitre played her part to perfection, saying that she had been educated with Mme. Acquet at the convent of the Nouvelles Catholique, and that she felt honoured in sharing the prison of the mother of her old school friend. In short, that evening she was in a position to betray the Marquise's confidence to Licquet. She had learned that Mme. Acquet had assisted at many of the attacks on coaches, dressed as a

man. Mme. de Combray dreaded nothing more than to have her daughter fall into the hands of the police. "If she is taken," she said, "she will accuse me." The Marquise was resigned to her fate; she knew she was destined for the scaffold; "after all, the King and the Queen had perished on the guillotine, and she would die there also." However, she was anxious to know if she could be saved by paying a large sum; but not a word was said about the yellow horse.

The next day she again wrote of the fear she felt for her daughter; she would have liked to warn her to disguise herself and go as a servant ten or twelve leagues from Falaise. "If she is arrested she will speak, and then I am lost," she continued; so that Licquet came to the conclusion that the reason the Marquise did not want the yellow horse to be found was that it would lead to the discovery of her daughter. Mme. Acquet had so successfully disappeared during the last two weeks that Réal was convinced she had escaped to England. Nothing could be done without d'Aché or Mme. Acquet. The failure of the pursuit, showing the organised strength of the royalist party and the powerlessness of the government, would justify Caffarelli's indolent neutrality. On the other hand, Licquet knew that failure spelled ruin for him. He had made the affair his business; his prefect, Savoye-Rollin, was very half-hearted about it, and quite ready to stop all proceedings at the slightest hitch. Réal was even preparing to sacrifice his subordinate if need be, and to the amiable letters at

first received from the ministry of police, succeeded curt orders that implied disfavour. "It is indispensable to find Mme. Acquet's retreat." "You must arrest d'Aché without delay, and above all find the yellow horse."

As if the Marquise were enjoying the confusion into which the mention of this phantom beast threw her persecutor, she continued to scribble on scraps of paper which the concierge was told to take to the lawyer, who never received them.

"There is one great difficulty ; the yellow horse is wanted. I shall send a safe and intelligent man to the place where it is, to tell the people to have it killed twelve leagues away and skinned at once. Send me in writing the road he must take, and the people to whom he must apply, so as to be able to do it without asking anything. He is strong and able to do fifteen leagues a day. Send me an answer."

Mme. de Combray had applied to the woman Delaitre for this "safe and intelligent man," and the latter had, at Licquet's instance, offered the services of her husband, an honest royalist, who in reality did not exist, but was to be personated by a man whom Licquet had ready to send in search of the horse as soon as its whereabouts should be determined. Lefebvre refused to answer this question for the same reason that he had refused to answer others, and the detective was obliged to confess his perplexity to Réal. "There is no longer any trouble in intercepting the prisoner's letters ; the difficulty of sending replies increases each day. You must give me abso-

lution, Monsieur, for all the sins that this affair has caused me to commit; for the rest, all is fair in love and war, and surely we are at war with these people." To which Réal replied: "I cannot believe that the horse only served for Mme. Acquet's flight; they would not advise the strange precaution of taking it twelve leagues away, killing, and skinning it on the spot. These anxieties show the existence of some grave offence, for which the horse was employed, and which its discovery will disclose. You must find out the history of this animal; how long Mme. de Combray has had it, and who owned it before." In vain Licquet protested that he had exhausted his supply of inventions and ruses; the invariable reply was, "Find the yellow horse!"

He cursed his own zeal; but an unexpected event renewed his confidence and energy. Lefebvre, who was arrested early in September, had just been thrown into the Conciergerie at Rouen. This new card, if well played, would set everything right. It was easy to induce Mme. de Combray to write another letter insisting once more on knowing "the exact address of the horse," and the lawyer at last answered unsuspectingly, "With Lanoë at Glatigny, near Bretteville-sur-Dives."

With Lanoë! Why had Licquet never guessed it! This name, indeed, so often mentioned in the declarations of the prisoners, had made no impression on him. Mme. Acquet was hidden there without doubt, and he triumphantly sent off an express to Réal announcing the good news, and sent two sharp



men to Glatigny at the same time. They left Rouen on September 15th, and time lagged for Licquet while awaiting their return. Three days, five days, ten days passed without any news of them. In his impatience he spent his time worrying Lefebre. A continuous correspondence was established between him and Mme. de Combray; but in his letters, as in his examination, he showed great mistrust, and Licquet even began to fear that the prudent lawyer would not have told where the yellow horse was, if he had not been sure that the hunt for it would be fruitless. And so the detective, who had played his last card, was in an agony during the two weeks' absence of his men. At last they returned, discomfited and weary, leading the foundered yellow horse, and accompanied by a sort of colossus, "somewhat resembling a grenadier," who was no other than Lanoë's wife.

The story told by Licquet's emissaries was as short as it was delusive. On arriving at Bretteville-sur-Dives they had gone to the farm of Glatigny, but had not found Lanoë, whom Caffarelli had arrested a fortnight before. His wife had received them, and after their first enquiry had led them to the famous horse's stable, enchanted at being relieved of the famished beast who consumed all her fodder. The men had gone as far as Caen, and obtained the prefect's authorisation to speak to Lanoë. The latter remembered that Lefebre had left the horse with him at the end of July, on returning from Tournebut, but he denied all knowledge of Mme. Acquet's retreat. If he was to be believed, she was "a prisoner of her



family," and would never be found, as the whole country round Falaise was "sold" to the mayor, M. de Saint-Léonard, who had declared himself his cousin's protector.

Lanoë's wife was sent back to Glatigny, but the horse was kept at Rouen—apparently in the hope that this dumb witness would bring some revelation. Licquet even cut off some of its hairs and sent them, carefully wrapped up, to Mme. de Combray, implying that they came from the faithful Delaitre, to whom the Marquise had confided the task of disposing of the compromising animal. The same evening the Marquise, completely reassured, wrote the following note to the lawyer :

"You see that my commissioner was speedy. I have had certain proof. He went to Lanoë's wife, found the horse, got on it, went five or six leagues, killed it, and brought away the skin. He brought me some of its coat, and I send you half, so that you may see the truth for yourself, and so have no fear. I am going to write to Soyer to say that he sold the horse at Guibray for 350 livres."

In her joy at being delivered from her nightmare, she wrote the same day to Colas, her groom, who was also in the Conciergerie : "Do not worry : do you need money ? I will send you twelve francs. The cursed horse ! They have sent me some of its skin, which I send for recognition. Burn this." And to her chambermaid, Catherine Querey : "The horse is killed. My agent skinned and burnt it. If you are asked about the missing horse, say that it was sold.

My miserable daughter gives me a great deal of pain."

Thus ends the story of the yellow horse. It finished its mysterious odyssey in the stables of Savoye-Rollin, where Licquet often visited it, as if he could thus learn its secret. For a doubt remained, and Réal's suggestion haunted him: "If the horse had only served for Mme. Acquet's flight, they would not advise the strange precaution of taking it twelve leagues away, killing, and skinning it on the spot." Even now a great deal of mystery hangs about it. The horse had not been used by Mme. Acquet, because we know that since the robbery of June 7th, she had not left the neighbourhood of Falaise. Lefebvre had ridden it from Tournebut; but was that a fact to be so carefully concealed? Why did the Marquise in her confidential letters insist on this point? "Say that the lawyer returned to his house on foot," is a sentence that we find in each of her letters. Since no mystery was made of the journey, why was its means of accomplishment important?

There was something unexplained, and Licquet was not satisfied. His tricks had brought no result. D'Aché was not found; Mme. Acquet had disappeared; her description had in vain been sent to all the brigades. Manginot, in despair of finding her, had renounced the search, and Savoye-Rollin himself was "determined to suspend all action." Such was the situation during the last days of September. It seemed most probable that the affair of Quesnay and the great plot of which it was an off-shoot, were go-

ing to join many others of the same kind, whose originators Fouché's police had despaired of finding, when an unexpected event reawakened Licquet's fervour and suggested to him a new machination.

## CHAPTER VII

### MADAME ACQUET

SECLUSION, isolation and trouble had in no way softened the Marquise de Combray's harsh nature. From the very first day, this woman, accustomed to living in a château, had accommodated herself to the life of a prisoner without abating anything of her haughty and despotic character. Her very illusions remained intact. She imagined that from her cell she still directed her confederates and agents, whom she considered one and all as servants, never suspecting that the permission to write letters, of which she made such bad use, was only a trap set for her ingenuous vanity. In less than a month she had written more than a hundred letters to her fellow-prisoners, which all passed through Licquet's hands. To one she dictated the answers he was to give, to another she counselled silence,—setting herself up to be an absolute judge of what they ought to say or to hold back, being quite unable to imagine that any of these unhappy people might prefer life to the pleasure of obeying her. She would have treated as a liar any one, be he who he might, who affirmed that all her accomplices had deserted her, that Soyer had hastened to disclose the secret hiding-places at Tournebut, that Mlle. Querey had told all about what

she had seen, that Lanoë pestered Caffarelli with his incessant revelations, and that Lefebvre, whom nothing but prudence kept silent, was very near telling all he knew to save his own head.

The Marquise was ignorant of all these defections. Licquet had created such an artificial atmosphere around her that she lived under the delusion that she was as important as before. Convinced that nobody was her equal in finesse and authority, she considered the detective sufficiently clever to deal with a person of humble position, but believed that as soon as she cared to trouble herself to bring it about, he would become entirely devoted to her. And Licquet, with his almost genial skilfulness, so easily fathomed the Marquise's proud soul—was such a perfect actor in the way he stood before her, spoke to her, and looked at her with an air of submissive admiration,—that it was no wonder she thought he was ready to serve her; and as she was not the sort of woman to use any discretion with a man of his class, she immediately despatched the turnkey to offer him the sum of 12,000 francs, half down, if he would consent to promote her interests. Licquet appeared very grateful, very much honoured, accepted the money, which he put in the coffers of the prefecture, and the very same day read a letter in which Mme. de Combray informed her accomplices of the great news: “We have the little secretary under our thumb.”

Ah! what great talks Licquet and the prisoner had, now they had become friends. From the very first conversation he satisfied himself that she did not



know Mme. Acquet's hiding-place; but the lawyer Lefebvre, who had at last ceased to be dumb, had not concealed the fact that it might be learned through a laundress at Falaise named Mme. Chauvel, and Licquet immediately informed Mme. de Combray of this fact and represented to her, in a friendly manner, the danger in which her daughter's arrest would involve her, and insinuated that the only hope of security lay in the escape to England of Mme. Acquet, "on whose head the government had set a price."

The idea pleased the Marquise; but who would undertake to discover the fugitive and arrange for her embarkation? Whom dared she trust, in her desperate situation? Licquet seemed the very one; he, however, excused himself, saying that a faithful man, carrying a letter from Mme. de Combray, would do as well, and the Marquise never doubted that her daughter would blindly follow her advice—supported by a sufficient sum of money to live abroad while awaiting better days. It remained to find the faithful man. The Marquise only knew of one, who, quite recently, at her request, had consented to go and look for the yellow horse, which he had killed and skinned, and who, she said, had acquitted himself so cleverly of his mission. She was never tired of praising this worthy fellow, who only existed, as every one knew, in her own imagination; she admitted that she did not know him personally, but had corresponded with him through the medium of the woman Delaitre, who had been placed near her; but she knew that he was the woman's husband, captain of a boat at Saint-

Valery-en-Caux, and, in addition, a relation of poor Raoul Gaillard, whom the Marquise remembered even in her own troubles.

Licquet listened quite seriously while his victim detailed the history of this fictitious person whom he himself had invented; he assured her that the choice was a wise one, for he had known Delaitre for a long time as a man whose loyalty was beyond all doubt. As there could be no question of introducing him into the prison, Licquet kindly undertook to acquaint him with the service expected of him, and to give him the three letters which Mme. de Combray was to write immediately. The first, which was very confidential, was addressed to the good Delaitre himself; the second was to be handed, at the moment of going on board, to Maugé, a lawyer at Valery, who was to provide the necessary money for the fugitive's existence in England; the third accredited Delaitre to Mme. Acquet. The Marquise ordered her daughter to follow the honest Captain, whom she represented as a tried friend; she begged her, in her own interest and that of all their friends, to leave the country without losing a day; and she concluded by saying that in the event of her obeying immediately, she would provide generously for all her wants; then she signed and handed the three letters to Licquet, overwhelming him with protestations of gratitude.

All the detective had to do was to procure a false Delaitre, since the real did not exist. They selected an intelligent man, of suitable bearing, and making out a detailed passport, despatched him to Falaise,

armed with the Marquise's letters, to have an interview with the laundress. Five days later he returned to Rouen. The Chauvels, on seeing Mme. de Combray's letters, quite unsuspectingly gave the messenger a warm welcome. The gendarme, however, did not approve of the idea of crossing to England. Mme. Acquet, he said, was very well hidden in Caen, and nobody suspected where she was. What was the use of exposing her to the risk of embarking at a well watched port. But as Delaitre insisted, saying that he had a commission from Mme. de Combray which he must carry out, Chauvel, whose duty kept him at Falaise, arranged to meet the Captain at Caen on the 2d of October. He wished to present him himself to Mme. Acquet, and to help his mistress in this matter on which her future depended. Thus it was that on the 1st of October, Licquet, now sure of success, put the false Captain Delaitre in the coach leaving for Caen, having given him as assistants, a nephew of the same name and a servant, both carefully chosen from amongst the wildest of his assistants. The next day the three spies got out at the Hôtel du Pare in the Faubourg de Vaucelles at Caen, which Chauvel had fixed as the meeting-place, and whither he had promised to bring Mme. Acquet.

Six weeks previously, when quitting Falaise on the 23d August, after the examination to which Caffarelli had subjected her, Mme. Acquet, still ignorant of her mother's arrest, had proposed going to Tournebut, in order to hide there for some time before starting for Paris, where she hoped to find Le Chevalier.

She had with her her third daughter, Céline, a child of six years, whom she counted on getting rid of by placing her at the school kept at Rouen by the ladies Dusaussay, where the two elder girls already were. They were accompanied by Chauvel's sister, a woman named Normand.

She went first to Caen where she was to take the diligence, and lodged with Bessin at the Coupe d'Or in the Rue Saint-Pierre. Chauvel came there the following day to say good-bye to his friend and they dined together. While they were at table, a man, whom the gendarme did not know, entered the room and said a few words to Mme. Acquet, who went into the adjoining room with him. It was Lemarchand, the innkeeper at Louvigny, Allain's host and friend. Chauvel grew anxious at this private conversation, and seeing the time of the diligence was approaching, opened the door and warned Mme. Acquet that she must get ready to start. To his great surprise, she replied that she was no longer going, as important interests detained her in Caen. She begged him to escort the woman Normand and the little girl to the coach, and gave him the address of a lawyer in Rouen with whom the child could be left. The gendarme obeyed, and when he went back to the Coupe d'Or an hour later, his mistress had left. He returned sadly to Falaise.

Lemarchand, who had been informed of Mme. Acquet's journey, came to tell her, from Allain, that "a lodging had been found for her where she would be secure, and that, if she did not wish to go, she had



only to come to the Promenade Saint-Julien at night-fall, and some one would meet her and escort her to her new hiding-place." It may well be that a threat of denouncing her, if she left the country, was added to this obliging offer. At any rate she was made to defer her journey. Towards ten o'clock at night, according to Lemarchand's advice, she reached the Promenade Saint-Julien alone, walked up and down under the trees for some time, and seeing two men seated on a bench, she went and sat down beside them. At first they eyed each other without saying a word; at last, one of the strangers asked her if she were not waiting for some one. Upon her answering in the affirmative they conferred for a moment, and then gave their names. They were the lawyer Vannier and Bureau de Placène, two intimate friends of Le Chevalier's. Mme. Acquet, in her turn, mentioned her name, and Vannier offering her his arm, escorted her to his house in the Rue Saint-Martin.

They held a council next day at breakfast. Lemarchand, Vannier, and Bureau de Placène appeared very anxious to keep Mme. Acquet. She was, they said, sure of not being punished as long as she did not quit the department of Calvados. Neither the prefect nor the magistrates would trouble to enquire into the affair, and all the gentry of Lower Normandy had declared for the family of Combray, which was, moreover, connected with all the nobility in the district. Such were the ostensible reasons which the three confederates put forth, their real reason was only a question of money. They imagined that



Mme. Acquet had the free disposal of the treasure buried at the Buquets, which amounted to more than 40,000 francs. Finding her ready to rejoin Le Chevalier, and persuaded that she would carry the remainder of this stolen money to her lover, they thought it well to stop her and the money, to which they believed they had a right—Lemarchand as Allain's friend and creditor, Placène in his capacity of cashier to the Chouans. The lawyer Vannier, as liquidator of Le Chevalier's debts, had offered to keep Mme. Acquet prisoner until they had succeeded in extorting the whole sum from her.

The life led by the unhappy woman at Vannier's, where she was a prey to this trio of scoundrels, was a purgatory of humiliations and misery. When the lawyer understood that not only did his prisoner not possess a single sou, but that she could not dispose of the Buquets' treasure, he flew into a violent passion and plainly threatened to give her up to the police; he even reproached her "for what she eat," swearing that somehow or other "he would make her pay board, for he certainly was not going to feed her free of cost." The unhappy woman, who had spent her last louis in paying for the seat in the Rouen diligence, which she had not occupied, wrote to Lefebvre early in September, begging him to send her a little money. He had received a large share of the plunder and might at least have shown himself generous; but he replied coolly that he could do nothing for her; and that she had better apply to Joseph Buquet.

This was exactly what they wished her to do.

Vannier himself brutally advised her to try going to Donnay, even at the risk of being arrested, in order to bring back some money from there ; and Lemarchand, rather than lose sight of her, resolved to accompany her.

Mme. Acquet, worn out and reduced to a state of subjection, consented to everything that was demanded of her. Dressed as a beggar, she took the road to Donnay where formerly she had ruled as sovereign mistress ; she saw again the long avenues at the end of which the façade of the château, imposing still despite its decay, commanded a view of the three terraces of the park ; she walked along by the walls to reach the Buquets' cottage where Joseph, who was hiding in the neighbouring woods, occasionally returned to watch over his treasure. She surprised him there on this particular day, and implored him to come to her assistance but the peasant was inflexible ; she obtained, however, the sum of one hundred and fifty francs, which he counted out to her in twelve-sou pieces and copper money. On the evening of her return to Caen Mme. Acquet faithfully made over the money to Vannier, reserving only fifteen francs for her trouble ; moreover, she was obliged to submit to her host's obscene allusions as to the means she had employed to extort this ridiculous sum from Buquet. She bore everything unmoved ; her indifference resembled stupefaction ; she no longer appeared conscious of the horrors of her situation or the dangers to which she was exposed. Her happiest days were spent in walks round the town with Chauvel

with whom she arranged meetings and who used to come from Falaise to pass a few hours with her; they went to a neighbouring village, dined there, and returned to the town at dusk.

Allain, too, showed some interest in her. He was hiding in the neighbourhood of Caen, and sometimes came in the evening to confer with Vannier in company with Bureau de Placène and a lawyer named Robert Langelley with whom her host had business dealings. They were all equally needed, and spent their time in planning means to make Joseph Buquet disgorge. Allain proposed only one plan, and it was adopted. Mme. Acquet was to go to Donnay again and try to soften the peasant; if he refused to show where the money was hidden, Allain was to spring on him and strangle him.

They set out from Caen one morning, about the 25th of September. Mme. Acquet had arranged to meet Joseph at the house of a farmer named Halbout, which was situated at some distance from the village of Donnay. He came at the appointed hour; but as he was approaching carefully, fearing an ambuscade, he caught sight of Allain hiding behind a hedge, and taking fright made off as fast as his legs could carry him.

They had to go back to Caen empty-handed and face the anger of Vannier, who accused his lodger of complicity with the Buquets to make their attempts miscarry. A fresh council was held, and this time Chauvel was admitted; he too, had a plan. This was that he and Mallet, one of his comrades, should

go to Donnay in uniform; Langelley was to play the part of commissary of police. "They were to arrest Buquet on the part of the government; if he consented to say where the money was, he was to be given his liberty, and the address of a safe hiding-place; in case of his refusing, the police were to kill him, and they would then be free to draw up a report of contumacy."

The Marquise de Combray's daughter was present at these conferences, meek and resigned, her heart heavy at the thought that this wretched money would become the prey of these men who had had none of the trouble and who would have all the profit. Every day she sank deeper and deeper into this quagmire; the plots that were hatched there, the things she heard—for they showed no reserve before her—were horrible. As she represented 40,000 francs to these ruffians, she had to endure not only their brutal gallantries, but also their confidences. "Mme. Placène one day suggested the enforced disappearance of the baker Lerouge," says Bornet, as he was "very religious and a very good man," she was afraid that if he were arrested, "he would not consent to lie, and would ruin them all." Langelley specially feared the garrulity of Flierlé and Lanoë, in prison at Caen, and he was trying to get them poisoned. He had already made an arrangement "with the chemist and the prison doctor, whom he had under his thumb," and he also knew a man who "for a small sum, would create a disturbance in the town, allow himself to be arrested and condemned to a few months' imprison-

ment, and would thus find a way of getting rid of these individuals." They also spoke of Acquet, who was still in jail at Caen. In everybody's opinion Mme. Vannier was his mistress, and went to see him every day in his cell. He was supposed to be a government spy, and Placène pretended that Vannier received money from him to keep him informed of Mme. Acquet's doings. Langelley, for his part, said that Placène was a rogue and that if "he had already got his share of the plunder, he received at least as much again from the police."

The poor woman who formed the pivot of these intrigues was not spared by her unworthy accomplices. Having in mind Joseph Buquet and Chauvel, they all suspected one another of having been her lovers. Vannier had thus made her pay for her hospitality; Langelley and the gendarme Mallet himself, had exacted the same price—accusations it was as impossible as it was useless to refute. She herself well knew her own abasement, and at times disgust seized her. On the evening of September 27th, she did not return to Vannier's; escaping from this hell, she craved shelter from a lacemaker named Adélaïde Monderard, who lodged in the Rue du Han, and who was Langelley's mistress. The girl consented to take her in and gave her up one of the two rooms which formed her lodgings, and which were reached by a very dark staircase. It was a poor room under the roof, lighted by two small casements, the furniture being of the shabbiest. Chauvel came to see her there the following day, and there it was that she learnt of the ex-



pected arrival of Captain Delaitre, sent by Mme. de Combray to save her, and secure her the means of going to England. Mme. Acquet manifested neither regret nor joy. She was astonished that her mother should think of her; but it seems that she did not attach great importance to this incident, which was to decide her fate. A single idea possessed her: how to find a retreat which would allow of her escaping from Vannier's hateful guardianship; and Langelley, who was very surprised at finding her at the lace-maker's, seeing her perplexity offered to escort her to a country house, about a league from the town, where his father lived. She set out with him that very evening; at the same hour the false Captain Delaitre left Rouen, and the ruse so cleverly planned by Licquet, put an end to Mme. Acquet's lamentable adventures.

Arriving at the Hôtel du Pare on October 2d, "Captain" Delaitre went to the window of his room and saw a man hurrying down the street with a very small woman on his arm, very poorly dressed. From his walk he recognised Chauvel dressed as a bourgeois; the woman was Mme. Acquet. The two men bowed, and Chauvel leaving his companion, went up to the Captain's room. "There were compliments, handshakes, the utmost confidence, as is usual between a soldier and a sailor." Chauvel explained that he had walked from Falaise that afternoon, and that in order to get off, he had pretended to his chiefs that private business took him to Bayonne. The false Delaitre immediately handed him

Mme. de Combray's two letters which Chauvel read absently.

"Let us go down," he said; "the lady is near and awaits us."

They met her a few steps farther down the road in company with Langelley, whom Chauvel introduced to Delaitre. The latter immediately offered his arm to Mme. Acquet: Chauvel, Langelley and the "nephew Delaitre" followed at some distance. They passed the bridge and walked along by the river under the trees of the great promenade, talking all the time. It was now quite dark.

Captain Delaitre "after having given Mme. Acquet her mother's compliments, informed her of the latter's intentions concerning her going to England or the isles." But the young woman flatly rejected the proposal; she was, she said, "quite safe with her friend's father, within reach of all her relations, and she would never consent to leave Caen, where she had numerous and devoted protectors." The Captain objected that this determination was all the more to be regretted since "the powerful personage who was interesting himself in the fate of his own people, demanded that she should have quitted France, before he began to seek Mme. de Combray's release." To which Mme. Acquet replied that she should never alter her decision.

The discussion lasted about half an hour. The Captain having mentioned a letter of Mme. de Combray's of which he was the bearer, Mme. Acquet turned to Langelley and asked him to escort her to

an inn, where she might read it. They crossed the bridge following Langelley up the Rue de Vaucelles, and stopped at an inn situated about a hundred yards above the Hôtel du Pare. Mme. Acquet and her companions entered the narrow passage and went upstairs to a room on the first floor, where they seated themselves at a table, and Langelley ordered wine and biscuits. The young woman took the Marquise's letter from the Captain's hands; all those around her were silent and watched attentively. They noticed that "she changed colour at every line and sighed."

"When do you start?" she asked Delaitre, wiping her eyes.

"Very early to-morrow," he replied.

She heaved another great sigh and began to read again. She became very nervous, and seemed about to faint. When she had finished the letter, she questioned Delaitre anew.

"You know for certain, sir, what this letter contains?"

"Yes, Madame; your mother read it to me."

She was silent for "more than two minutes"; then she said as if she were making a great effort:

"One must obey one's mother's orders. Well, Monsieur, I will go with you. Will you not wait till to-morrow evening?"

Captain Delaitre at first demurred at the idea of deferring his journey; but at last their departure was fixed for the following day, October 3d, at nightfall. A heated discussion ensued. Langelley noticed that Vannier, Allain, Placène and the others did not ap-

prove of Mme. Acquet's decision. They were all certain that she ran not the slightest risk by remaining in Caen, inasmuch as there would never be a judge to prosecute nor a tribunal to condemn her. Delaitre replied that it was precisely to guard against the indulgence of the Calvados authorities, that an imperial decree had laid the affair before the special court at Rouen; but the lawyer who could not see his last chance of laying hands on the Buquets' treasure disappear without feeling some annoyance, replied that nothing must be decided without the advice of their friends. The young woman ended the discussion by declaring that she was going "because it was her mother's wish."

"Are you sure," asked Chauvel, "that that really is your mother's writing?"

She answered yes, and the gendarme said that in his opinion she was right to obey.

They then settled the details of the departure. Langelley offered to conduct the travellers to the borders of the department of Calvados, which Delaitre knew very slightly. Mme. Acquet was to take no luggage. Her clothes were to be forwarded to her, care of the Captain, at the Rouen office. The conversation took a "tone of the sincerest friendship and the greatest confidence." When the hour for separating came, Mme. Acquet pressed the Captain's hand several times, saying, "Till to-morrow, then, Monsieur." And as she went down the stairs Chauvel remained behind with Delaitre, to make sure that the latter had brought money to pay the small

debts which the fugitive had incurred with the tradesmen.

Towards eleven on the following morning Chauvel presented himself at the inn alone. He went up at once to Delaitre's room who asked him to lunch and sent his nephew out to get oysters. Chauvel had come to beg Delaitre to put off his journey another day, as Mme. Acquet could not start before Sunday, the 4th. While they were at lunch Chauvel became quite confidential. He could not see his friend go away without regret; he alone, he said, had served her from pure devotion. He told how, in order to put off his comrades, who had been charged by Manginot to draw up a description of the fugitive, he had intentionally made it out incorrectly, describing her "as being very stout and having fair hair." He talked of d'Aché whom he considered a brigand and "the sole cause of all the misfortunes which had happened to Mme. de Combray and her family. Finally he inquired if the Captain would consent to take Buquet and Allain to England as they were in fact two of the principal actors in the affair, and the Captain consented very willingly. It was agreed that as soon as he had landed Mme. Acquet in England, he should return to Saint-Valery which was his port. All Allain and Buquet had to do, was to go to Privost, the innkeeper, opposite the post at Cany on Wednesday, the 14th, and he would meet them and take them on board.

During luncheon Delaitre, who was obviously a messenger of Providence, counted out 400 francs in



gold on the table, and gave them to Chauvel to pay his mistress's debts.

Vannier had claimed six louis for the hospitality he had shown her, alleging that "this sort of lodger ought to pay more than the others on account of the risk;" he further demanded that the cost of twenty masses, which Mme. Acquet had had said, should be refunded to him. Chauvel spent part of the Sunday with Delaitre; the meeting was fixed for seven in the evening. The Captain was to wait at the door of his inn and follow Mme. Acquet when he saw her pass with the gendarme. She only appeared at ten at night, and they walked separately as far as Vaucelles. Langelley kept them waiting, but he arrived at last on a borrowed horse; the Captain had got a post-horse; as for the nephew, Delaitre, and the servant, they had gone back the evening before to Rouen.

The time had come to say good-bye. Mme. Acquet embraced Chauvel who parted from her "in the tenderest manner, enjoining Delaitre to take the greatest care of the precious object confided to him." Langelley, armed with a club for a riding whip, placed himself at the head of the cavalcade, Delaitre warmly wrapping Mme. Acquet in his cloak, took her up behind him, and with renewed good wishes, warm handshakes, and sad "au revoirs" the horsemen set off at a trot on the road to Dives. Chauvel saw them disappear in the mist, but he waited at the deserted crossroads as long as he could hear the clatter of their horses' hoofs on the road.

They arrived at Dives about three in the morning.

The young woman, who had seemed very lively, protested that she was not tired, and refused to get off. Therefore Langelley alone entered the post-house, woke up the guide he had engaged the day before; and they continued their journey. The day was breaking when they arrived at Annebault; the three travelers halted at an inn where they spent the whole day; the lawyer and Mme. Acquet settled their little accounts. They slept a little, they talked a great deal, and spent a long time over dinner. At six in the evening they mounted their horses again and took the road to Pont-l'Évêque. Langelley escorted the fugitives as far as the forest of Touques: before leaving Mme. Acquet, he asked her for a lock of her hair; he then embraced her several times.

It was nearly midnight when the young woman found herself alone with Delaitre. The horse advanced with difficulty along the forest roads. Clinging to the Captain with both arms, Mme. Acquet no longer talked; her excitement of yesterday had given place to a kind of stupor, so that Delaitre, who in the darkness could not see that her great dark eyes were open, thought that she had fallen asleep on his shoulder. At three in the morning they at length arrived at the suburbs of Pont-Audemer; the Captain stopped at the post-house and asked for a room; in the register which was presented to him he wrote: "Monsieur Delaitre and wife."

They were breakfasting towards noon when a non-commissioned marine officer, accompanied by an escort of two men, entered the room. He went straight

up to Delaitre, asked his name, and observing his agitation, called upon him to show his papers. These he took possession of after a brief examination, and then ordered the soldiers to put Delaitre under arrest.

The officer, an amiable and talkative little man, continually excused himself to Mme. Acquet for the annoyance he was causing her. Captain Delaitre, he said, had left his ship without any authority, and it had been pointed out, moreover, that he had willingly engaged in smuggling while pretending to be trading along the coast. He did not commit the indiscretion of inquiring the lady's name, nor what reason she had for scouring the country in company of a ship's captain; but he carefully gave her to understand that she must be detained until they got to Rouen, whither Delaitre would be escorted to receive a reprimand from the commandant of the port. Mme. Acquet was convinced that it was nothing but a misunderstanding which would be cleared up at Rouen, and troubled very little about the incident; and as she was worn out with fatigue, she expressed a wish to spend that night and the following day at Pont-Audemer. The little officer consented with alacrity, and whilst appearing only to keep an eye on Delaitre, he never for an instant lost sight of the young woman, whose attitudes, gestures and appearance he scrutinised with malicious eyes. It was Licquet, as we have already guessed, who in his haste to know the result of the false Delaitre's adventures, had dressed himself up in a borrowed uniform and come to receive his new victim. He was full of forethought for her; he took

her in a carriage from Pont-Audemer to Bourg-Achard, where he allowed her to rest. On the morning of the seventh they left Bourg-Achard and arrived at Rouen before midday. The kindly officer was so persuasive that Mme. Acquet offered no resistance nor recriminations when she was taken to the Conciergerie, where she was entered under the name of Rosalie Bourdon, doubtless the one under which she had travelled. She appeared quite indifferent to all that went on around her. On entering this prison, where she knew her mother was, she showed absolutely no emotion. She remained in this state of resigned lassitude for two days. Licquet, who came to see her several times, endeavoured to keep her under the impression that her imprisonment had no other cause than Delaitre's infringement of the maritime regulations; he even took the precaution of pretending not to know her name.

Meanwhile, he laid his plans for attack. At first his joy, at capturing the much desired prey had been so keen that he could not withstand the pleasure of writing the news straight to Réal whom he asked to keep it secret for a fortnight. On reflexion he realised how difficult it would be to obtain confessions from a woman who had been so hideously deceived, and he felt that the traps, into which the naïve Mme. de Combray had fallen would be of no avail in her daughter's case. He had better ones: on his person he carried the letter which Mme. de Combray had written to her dear Delaitre, which he had taken from the Captain in Mme. Acquet's very presence. In



this letter, the Marquise had spoken of her daughter as "the vilest of creatures, lamenting that for her own safety she was obliged to come to the assistance of such a monster; she especially complained of the amount of money it was costing her."

On the 9th of October, Licquet came into Mme. Acquet's cell, began to converse familiarly with her, told her that he knew her name and showed her Mme. de Combray's letter. On reading it Mme. Acquet flew into a violent passion. Licquet comforted her, gave her to understand that he was her only friend, that her mother hated her and had only helped her in the hope of saving her own life; that the lawyer Lefebvre had sold himself to the police on giving the Chauvels' address at Falaise, in proof of which he showed her the note written by the lawyer's own hand. He even went so far as to allude to certain infidelities on the part of Le Chevalier, and to the mistresses he must have had in Paris, till at last the unhappy woman burst into tears of indignation and grief.

"Enough," she said; "it is my turn now; you must receive my declaration immediately, and take it at once to the prefect. I will confess everything. My life is a burden to me."

She immediately told the long story of d'Aché's plans, his journeys to England, the organisation of the plot, the attempt to print the Prince's manifesto, and also how he had beguiled Le Chevalier and had succeeded in drawing him into it, by promises of high rank and great honours. She said, too, that d'Aché



whom she accused of having caused all the unhappiness of her life, had recommended robbing the public treasury; that the attacks on the coaches had been carried out by his orders, which had been "to stop them all." She accused her mother of helping to transport the booty to Caen; herself she accused of having sheltered the brigands. The only ones she excused were Joseph Buquet, who had only carried out her instructions, and Le Chevalier whom she represented as beguiled by d'Aché's misleading promises. Her "frantic passion" was apparent in every word she uttered: she even told Licquet that "if she could save Le Chevalier's life at the cost of her own she would not hesitate."

When she had finished her long declaration, she fell into a state of deep depression. On entering the prison next day, Licquet found her engaged in cutting off her magnificent hair, which, she said sadly, she wished to save from the executioner. She observed that since she was miserably destined to die, Chauvel, who called himself her friend, had done very wrong in preventing her from taking poison: all would have been over by now. But she hoped that grief would kill her before they had time to condemn her.

As she said these words she turned her beautiful piercing eyes to a dark corner of her cell. Licquet, following her gaze, saw a very prominent nail sticking in the wall at a height of about six feet. Without letting her see his anxiety, he tried to direct the prisoner's attention to other objects, and succeeded in working her up to a state of "wild gaiety."

That very day the nail was taken out, but there still remained the bolts of the door and the bed-posts, to which, being of such low stature, she could hang herself; a woman from Bicêtre was therefore set to watch her.

It would be impossible to follow Licquet through all the phases of the inquiry. This diabolical man seems to have possessed the gift of ubiquity. He was in the prison where he worked upon the prisoners; at the prefecture directing the examinations; at Caen, making inquiries under the very nose of Caffarelli, who believed that the affair had long since been buried; at Falaise, where he was collecting testimony; at Honfleur, at Pont-Audemer, at Paris. He drew up innumerable reports, and sent them to the prefect or to Réal, with whom he corresponded directly, and when he was asked what reward he was ambitious of obtaining for his devoted service to the State, he replied philosophically: "I do not work for my own glory, but only for that of the police generally, and of our dear Councillor, whom I love with all my heart. As for me, poor devil, I am destined to remain obscure, which, I must say, pleases me, since I recognise the inconvenience of having a reputation."

One of the most picturesque events of his enquiry was another journey taken towards the end of October by the false Captain Delaitre and his false nephew in search of Allain and Buquet, whom they had not found on the day mentioned at the inn at Cany. At Caen Delaitre saw again the lawyer Langelley, the

Placènes and Monderard's daughter, and they entertained him. He gave them very good news of Mme. Acquet, who, he said, was comfortably settled at a place on the English coast; but although he had a very important letter for Allain, which Mme. de Combray wished him to take to England without delay, the wily Chouan did not show himself. His daughter, who had set up as a dressmaker at Caen and was in communication with Mme. Placène, undertook, however, to forward the letter to him. The Captain announced his intention of following the girl in the hope of discovering her father's retreat, but Langelley and the others assured him that it would be a waste of time. The young girl alone knew where the outlaw was hidden and "each time she went to take him news, she disguised herself, entered a house, disguised herself afresh before leaving, went into another house, changed her costume yet again, and so on. It was impossible to be sure when she came out of each house that it was the same person who had gone in, and to know in which her father was." Two days later the girl reappeared. She said that her father had gone to his own home near Cherbourg, where "he had property." He wanted to sell his furniture and lease his land before going to England. This was the other side of the terrible "General Antonio." He was a good father and a small landed proprietor. Delaitre realised that this was a defeat, and that Allain was not easily to be beguiled. He did not persist, but packed up his traps and returned to Rouen.

This check was all the more painful to Licquet, since he had hoped that by attracting Allain, d'Aché would also be ensnared. Without the latter, who was evidently the head of the conspiracy, only the inferiors could be arraigned, and the part of the principal criminal would have to be passed over in silence, in consequence of which the affair would sink to the proportions of common highway robbery. Stimulated by these motives, and still more so by his amour-propre, Licquet set out for Caen. His joy in action was so keen that it pervades all his reports. He describes himself as taking the coach with Delaitre, his nephew and "two or three active henchmen." He is so sure of success that he discounts it in advance: "I do not know," he writes to Réal, "whether I am flattering myself too much, but I am tempted to hope that the author will be called for at the end of the play."

It is to be regretted that we have no details of this expedition. In what costume did Licquet appear at Caen? What personality did he assume? How did he carry out his manœuvres between Mme. Acquet's friends, his confederate Delaitre and the Prefect Caffarelli, without arousing any one's suspicion or wounding their susceptibilities? It is impossible to disentangle this affair; he was an adept at troubling water that he might safely fish in it, and seemed jealous to such a degree of the means he employed, that he would not divulge the secret to any one. With an instinctive love of mystification, he kept up during his journey an official correspondence with his pre-



fect and a private one with Réal. He told one what he would not confess to the other; he wrote to Savoye-Rollin that he was in a hurry to return to Rouen, while by the same post he asked Réal to get him recalled to Paris during the next twenty-four hours. "If you adopt this idea, Monsieur, you must be kind enough to select a pretext which will not wound or even scratch any one's amour-propre." The "any one" mentioned here is Savoye-Rollin. What secret had Licquet discovered, that he did not dare to confide, except orally, and then only to the Imperial Chief of Police? We believe that we are not wrong in premising that scarcely had he arrived at Caen when he laid hands on a witness so important, and at the same time so difficult to manipulate, that he was himself frightened at this unexpected *coup de théâtre*.

Whilst ferreting about in the prisons to which he had obtained access that he might talk to Lanoë and the Buquets, he met Acquet de Férolles, who had been forgotten there for three months. Whether Mme. de Placène was, as Vannier suspected, employed by the police and knew Licquet's real personality, or whether the latter found another intermediary, it is certain that he obtained Acquet de Férolles' confidence from the beginning, and that he got the credit of having him set at liberty. It was after this interview that Licquet asked Réal to recall him to Paris for twenty-four hours. His journey took place in the early days of November, and on the 12th, on an order from Réal Acquet was rearrested and taken



in a post-chaise from Donnay to Paris, escorted by a sergeant of police. On the 16th he was entered in the Temple gaol-book, and Réal, who hastened to interrogate him, showed him great consideration, and promised that his detention should not be long. A note, which is still to be found among the papers connected with this affair, seems to indicate that this incarceration was not of a nature to cause great alarm to the Lord of Donnay : “ M. Acquet has been taken to Paris that he may not interfere with the proceedings against his wife. . . . It is known that he is unacquainted with his wife’s offence, but M. Réal believes it necessary to keep him at a distance.” That was not the tone in which the police of that period usually spoke of their ordinary prisoners, and it seems advisable to call attention to the fact. Let us add that the royalists detained in the Temple were not taken in by it. M. de Revoire, an old habitué of the prison, who spent the whole of the Imperial period in captivity told the Combray family after the Restoration, that all the prisoners considered Acquet “ as a spy, an informer, the whole time he was in the Temple.” After a week’s imprisonment and three weeks’ surveillance in Paris, he was set at liberty and returned to Donnay.

From the comparison of these facts and dates, is one not led to infer that Licquet had persuaded Acquet without much difficulty we may be sure, to become his wife’s accuser? But the desire not to compromise himself, and still more the dread of reprisals, shut the mouth of the unworthy husband at

Caen, eager though he was to speak in Paris, provided that no one should suspect the part he was playing; hence this sham imprisonment in the Temple—evidently Licquet's idea—which gave him time to make revelations to Réal.

Whatever it may have been, this incident interrupted Licquet's journey to Caen. He continued it towards the middle of November, quitting Rouen on the 18th, still accompanied by Delaitre and others of his cleverest men. This time he represented himself as an inspector of taxes, which gave him the right of entering houses and visiting even the cellars. His aim was to unearth Allain, Buquet and especially d'Aché, but none of them appeared. We cannot deal with this third journey in detail, as Licquet has kept the threads of the play secret, but from half-confidences made to Réal, we may infer that he bought the concurrence of Langelley and Chauvel on formal promises of immunity from punishment; they consented to serve the detective and betray Allain, and they were on the point of delivering him up when "fear of the Gendarme Mallet caused everything to fail." Licquet fell back with his troop, taking with him Chauvel, Mallet and Langelley, who were soon to be followed by Lanoë, Vannier, Placène and all the Buquets, save Joseph, who had not been seen again. But before starting on his return journey to Rouen, Licquet wished to pay his respects to Count Caffarelli, the Prefect of Calvados, in whose territory he had just been hunting. The latter did not conceal his displeasure, and thought it strange that his own

gendarmes should be ordered to proceed with criminal cases and to make arrests of which they neglected even to inform him. Licquet states that after "looking black at him, Caffarelli laughed till he cried" over the stories of the false Captain Delaitre and the false inspector of taxes. It is probable that the story was well told; but the Prefect of Calvados was none the less annoyed at the uncereemonious procedure, as he testified a little later with some blustering. Licquet, moreover, was not deceived: on his return from Caen, he wrote: "Behold, I have quarrelled with the Prefect of Calvados."

However, he cared very little about it. It had been tacitly decreed that the robbery at Quesnay should be judged by a special court at Rouen. Licquet became the organiser and stage-manager of the proceedings. At the end of 1807 he had under lock and key thirty-eight prisoners whom he questioned incessantly, and kept in a state of uncertainty as to whether he meant to confront them with each other. But he declared himself dissatisfied. D'Aché's absence spoiled his joy. He quite understood that without the latter, his triumph would be incomplete, his work would remain unfinished, and it was doubtless due to this torturing obsession that he owed the idea, as cruel as it was ingenious, of a new drama of which the old Marquise de Combray was again the victim.

On a certain day of November, 1807, she heard from her cell an unusual tumult in the passages of the prison. Doors burst open and people called to each

other. There were cries of joy, whispers, exclamations of astonishment or vexation, then long silences, which left the prisoner perplexed. The next day when Licquet came to visit her she noticed that his face wore a troubled expression. He was very laconic, mentioned grave events which were preparing, and disappeared like a busy man. To prisoners everything is a reason for hope, and that night Mme. de Combray gave free course to her illusions. The following day she received through the woman Delaitre, a short letter from the honest "Captain"—the man who had saved Mme. Acquet, killed the yellow horse, and whom she called her guardian angel. The guardian angel wrote only a few words: "Bonaparte is overthrown; the King is about to land in France; the prisons are opening everywhere. Write a letter at once to M. d'Aché which he can hand to his Majesty. I will undertake to forward it to him."

It is a truly touching fact that the old Marquise, whose energy no fatigue, no moral torture could abate, fainted from happiness on learning of her King's return.

The event realised all her hopes. For so many years she had been expecting it from one moment to another, without ever growing discouraged, that a dénouement for which she had been prepared so long, seemed quite natural to her, and she immediately made her arrangements for the new life that was about to commence. She first of all wrote a line of thanks to the "good Delaitre," promising her protection and assuring him that he should be rewarded for his devo-



tion. She then wrote to d'Aché a letter overflowing with joy.

"I have reached the pinnacle of my happiness, my dear Vicomte," she wrote, "which is that of all France. I rejoice in your glory. M. Delaitre has rendered me the greatest services, and during the past two months has been constantly journeying in my behalf. His wife, my companion in misfortune, has turned towards me his interest in the unhappy, and he has sent me a message informing me of the great events which are to put an end to all our troubles, advising me to write a letter to the King and send it to you to present to him. This is a bright idea, and compensates for the fact that my son is not lucky enough to be in his proper place, as we desired and planned. Your dear brother in chains is only supported by the thought of your glory. I do not know how to speak to a king so great by reason of his courage and virtue. I have allowed my heart to speak, and I count upon you to obtain the favour of a visit from him at Tournebut. The prisons are open everywhere. . . . I have borne my imprisonment courageously for three years, but fell ill on hearing the great news. You will let me know in time if I am to have the happiness of entertaining the King. It is very bold of me to ask if such a favour is possible in a house which I believe to be devastated by commissioners who have exhausted on it their rage at not finding you there. Render, I beg of you, to M. Delaitre all that I owe him. You will know him as a relation of our poor Raoul. He is inspired with the same sentiments and begs you to let him serve you, not wishing to remain idle in such a good cause and at such a great moment. This letter bears the marks of our imprisonment. Accept, my dear



Vicomte, my sentiments of attachment and veneration.

“I have the honour to be,

“Your very humble servant,

“DE COMBRAY.

“I shall go to your mother’s to await the King’s passing, if I obtain my liberty before his arrival, and I shall have to go to Tournebut in order to have everything repaired and made ready if I am to enjoy this favour. You will write, and wait impatiently.”

The most heartrending of the letters despatched by the duped old royalist in her joy, is the one destined for the King himself. Proud of his stratagem, Licquet forwarded it to the police authorities, who retained it. It is written in a thick, masculine hand on large paper—studied, almost solemn at the beginning, then, with the outpouring of her thoughts, ending in an almost illegible scribble. One feels that the poor woman wanted to say everything, to empty her heart, to free herself of eighteen years of mortification, mourning and suppressed indignation. The following is the text of the letter, almost complete :

“*To His Majesty Louis XVIII.*

“SIRE :—From my prison, where at the age of sixty-six, I as well as my son, have been thrust for the last four months, we have the happiness of offering you our respects and congratulations on your happy accession to your throne. All our wishes are fulfilled, sire. . . .

“The few resources still at our command were devoted to supporting your faithful servants of every class, and in saving them from execution. I have to re-

gret the loss of the Chevalier de Margadelle, Raoulle, Tamerlan and the young Tellier, all of whom were carried away by their zeal for your Majesty's cause and fell victims to it at Paris and Versailles. I had hired a house, which I gave up to them with all the hiding-places necessary for their safety. My son had the good fortune to be under the orders of Messieurs de Frotté and Ingant de St. Maur.

"I am sending my letter to M. le Vicomte d'Aché, in order that he may present it to your Majesty and solicit a favour very dear to my heart—that you will condescend to stay at my house on your way to Paris. Sire, you will find my house open, and, they say, surrounded with barricades, consequences of the ill-usage it has received during their different investigations, another of which has recently occurred in the hope of finding M. le Vicomte d'Aché and my daughter, as well as repeated sojourns made by order of the prefect, and an interrogation by his secretary, after having been subjected to an examination lasting eleven hours in this so-called Court of Justice, in order that I might inform them of my correspondence with M. de Aché as well as of a letter I received from him on the 17th of last March. The worst threats have been used such as being confronted with Le Chevalier, and my being sent to Paris to be guillotined, but nothing terrified me, I did not tell them anything about my relations with him or where he was living. I had just left him ten days previously. My reply to this persecution was that M. de Aché was in London, and I concluded by assuring them that I did not fear death, that I would fervently perform my last act of contrition, and that my head would fall without my disclosing this interesting mystery.

"My liberty was promised me six weeks ago, but at the price of a large sum of money, which is, I believe, to be divided between the prefect and his secre-

tary Niquet (*sic*). Half the sum is safely under lock and key in the latter's bureau. I have been a long time trying to collect the sum demanded, as I received little assistance from those who called themselves my friends. My very property was refused me with arrogant threats, for it was believed that I was to be put to the sword. The only end I hoped to attain by my sacrifices was to save my daughter, upon whose head a price of 6,000 francs had been set at Caen. The family Delaitre, without any other interest in me than that which misfortune inspires have displayed indefatigable zeal in my cause, exposing their lives to great danger in order to remove her from Caen, where the authorities left no stone unturned.

"Three of my servants have been cast into prison, a fourth, named François Hébert, commendable for thirty-seven years' faithful service, defended our interests, and for his honesty's sake has been in chains since the month of July. What must he not have suffered during the last eleven years at the hands of the authorities, the tax receivers at Harcourt, Falaise and Caen, and of many others who wished his ruin because at our advice he purposely took the farm on our estate, that he might there save your persecuted followers. He is well known to M. de Frotté whose esteem he enjoyed, and whom he received with twenty-four of his faithful friends, knowing they would be safe in his house. All this anxiety has greatly impaired his health and that of his wife, who was pregnant at the time, and consequently their son, aged eleven, is in very delicate health. The Dartenet (*sic*) family have caused many of our misfortunes by daily denunciations, which they renewed with all their might in January, 1806. It was only by a special providence that we, as well as M. le Vicomte d'Aché, escaped imprisonment. My son hastened to warn him not to return to our cottage, which was part of

my dowry, and offended the Dartenets, who wanted this tavern that they might turn it into a special inn for their castle, which is the fruit of their iniquity.

“My son and I both crave your Majesty’s protection and that of the princes of the blood.

“I respectfully remain,

“Your Majesty’s very humble and obedient servant,  
“DE COMBRAY.”

It was, as we see, a general confession. What must have been the Marquise’s grief and rage on learning that she had been deceived? At what moment did Licquet cease to play a double part with her? With what invectives must she not have overwhelmed him when he ceased? How did Mme. de Combray learn that her noblest illusions had been worked upon to make her give up her daughter and betray all her friends? These are things Licquet never explained, either because he was not proud of the dubious methods he employed, or, more probably, because he did not care what his victims thought of them. Besides, his mind was occupied with other things. Mme. de Combray had hinted to Delaitre that d’Ach  usually stayed in the neighbourhood of Bayeux, without stating more precisely where, as she was certain he would easily be found beside the newly landed King. Licquet, therefore, went in search of him, and his men scoured the neighbourhood. Plac ne, for his part, annoyed at finding that Allain did not keep his word and made no attempt to deliver his imprisoned comrades, gave some hints. In order to communicate with Allain and d’Ach , one



was, according to him, obliged to apply to an inn-keeper at Saint-Exupère. This man was in correspondence with a fellow named Richard, who acted as courier to the two outlaws. "Between Bayeux and Saint-Lô is the coal mine of Litré, and the vast forest of Serisy is almost contiguous to it. This mine employed five or six hundred workmen, and as Richard was employed there one was inclined to think that the subterranean passages might serve as a refuge to Allain and d'Aché, whether they were there in the capacity of miners, or were hidden in some hut or disused ditch."

The information was too vague to be utilised, and Licquet thought it wiser to direct his batteries on another point. He had under his thumb one victim whom as yet he had not tortured, and from whom he hoped much: this was Mme. Acquet. "She is," he wrote, "a second edition of her mother for hypocrisy, but surpasses her in maliciousness and ill-nature. . . . Her children seem to interest her but little; she never mentions them to any one, and her heart is closed to all natural sentiments."

But I believe that it was to excuse himself in his chief's eyes that Licquet painted such a black picture of the prisoner. His own heart was closed to all compassion, and we find in this man the inexorable impassibility of a Laffemas or a Fouquier Tinville, with a refined irony in addition which only added to the cruelty. The moral torture to which he subjected Mme. Acquet is the product of an inquisitor's mind. "At present," he remarked, "as the subject



is somewhat exhausted, I shall turn my attention to setting our prisoners against one another. The little encounter may give us some useful facts."

The little encounter broke the prisoner's heart, and deprived her of the only consoling thought so many misfortunes had left her.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PAYING THE PENALTY

“LE CHEVALIER is the adored one.”

It was thus that Licquet summarised his first conversation with Mme. Acquet. He had been certain for some time that her unbridled passion for her hero held such a place in her heart that it had stifled all other feeling. For his sake she had harboured Allain's men; for him she had so often gone to brave the scornful reception of Joseph Buquet; and for him she had so long endured the odious life in Vannier's house. Licquet decided that so violent a passion, “well handled,” might throw some new light on affairs. This incomparable comedian should have been seen playing his cruel game. In what manner did he listen to the love-sick confidences of his prisoner? In what sadly sympathetic tones did he reply to the glowing pictures she drew of her lover? For she spoke of little else, and Licquet listened silently until the moment when, in a burst of feeling, he took both her hands, and as if grieved at seeing her duped, exclaiming with hypocritical regard: “My poor child! Is it not better to tell you everything?” made her believe that Le Chevalier had denounced her. She refused at first to believe it. Why should her lover have done such an infamous thing? But Licquet

gave reasons. Le Chevalier, while in the Temple had learned, from Vannier or others, of her relations with Chauvel, and in revenge had set the police on the track of his faithless friend. And so the man for whom she had sacrificed her life no longer loved her ! Licquet, in order to torture her, overwhelmed the unhappy woman with the intentionally clumsy consolation that only accentuates grief. She wept much, and had but one thing to say.

“I should like to save him in spite of his ingratitude.”

This was not at all what the detective wished. He had hoped she would, in her turn, accuse the man who had betrayed her ; but he could gain nothing on this point. She felt no desire for revenge. The letters she wrote to Le Chevalier (Licquet encouraged correspondence between prisoners) are full of the sadness of a broken but still loving heart.

“It is not when a friend is unfortunate that one should reproach him, and I am far from doing so to you, in spite of your conduct as regards me. You know I did everything for you,—I am not reproaching you for it,—and after all, you have denounced me ! I forgive you with all my heart, if that can do you any good, but I know your reason for being so unjust to me ; you thought I had abandoned you, but I swear to you I had not.”

There was not much information in that for Licquet, and in the hope of learning something, he excited Mme. Acquet strongly against d'Aché. According to him d'Aché was the one who first “sold

them all"; it was he who caused Le Chevalier to be arrested, to rid himself of a troublesome rival after having compromised him; it was to d'Aché alone that the prisoners owed all their misfortunes. And Licquet found a painful echo of his insinuations in all Mme. Acquet's letters to her lover; but he found nothing more. "You know that Delorriere d'Aché is a knave, a scoundrel; that he is the cause of all your trouble; that he alone made you act; you did not think of it yourself, and he advised you badly. He alone deserves the hatred of the government. He is abhorred and execrated as he deserves to be, and there is no one who would not be glad to give him up or kill him on the spot. He alone is the cause of your trouble. Recollect this; do not forget it."

It is not necessary to say that these letters never reached Le Chevalier, who was secretly confined in the tower of the Temple until Fouché decided his fate. He was rather an embarrassing prisoner; as he could not be directly accused of the robbery of Quesnay in which he had not taken part, and as they feared to draw him into an affair to which his superb gift of speech, his importance as a Chouan gentleman, his adventurous past and his eloquent professions of faith might give a political significance similar to that of Georges Cadoudal's trial, there remained only the choice of setting him at liberty or trying him simply as a royalist agent. Now, in 1808 they did not wish to mention royalists. It was understood that they were an extinct race, and orders were given to no longer speak of them to the public, which must

long since have forgotten that in very ancient days the Bourbons had reigned in France.

Thus, Réal did not know what was to become of Le Chevalier when Licquet conceived the idea of giving him a rôle in his comedy. We have not yet obtained all the threads of this new intrigue. Whether Licquet destroyed certain over-explicit papers, or whether he perferred in so delicate a matter to act without too much writing, there remain such gaps in the story that we have not been able to establish the correlation of the facts we are about to reveal. It is certain that the idea of exploiting Mme. Acquet's passion and promising her the freedom of her lover in exchange for a general confession, was originated by Licquet. He declares it plainly in a letter addressed to Réal. By this means they obtained complete avowals from her. On December 12th she gave a detailed account of her adventurous life from the time of her departure from Falaise until her arrest ; a few days later she gave some details of the conspiracy of which d'Aché was the chief, to which we shall have to return. What must be noted at present is this remarkable coincidence : on the 12th she spoke, after receiving Licquet's formal promise to ensure Le Chevalier's escape, and on the 14th he actually escaped from the Temple. Had Licquet been to Paris between these two dates ? It seems probable ; for he speaks in a letter of a "pretended absence" which might well have been real.

The manner of Le Chevalier's escape is strange enough to be described. By reason of his excited



condition, "which threw him into continual transports, and which had seemed to the concierge of the prison to be the delirium of fever," he had been lodged, not in the tower itself, but in a dependence, one of whose walls formed the outer wall of the prison, and overlooked the exterior courts. He had been ill for several days, and being subject to profuse sweats had asked to have his sheets changed frequently, and so was given several pairs at a time. On December 13th, at eight in the morning, the keeper especially attached to his person (Savard) had gone in to arrange the little dressing-room next to Le Chevalier's chamber. Returning at one o'clock to serve dinner, he found the prisoner reading; at six in the evening another keeper (Carabeuf), bringing in a light, saw him stretched on his bed. The next day on going into his room in the morning, they found that he had fled.

Le Chevalier had made in the wall of his dressing-room, which was two yards thick, a hole large enough to slip through. They saw that he had done it with no other tool than a fork; two bits of log, cut like wedges, had served to dislodge and pull out the stones. The operation had been so cleverly managed, all the rubbish having been carefully taken from within, that no trace of demolition appeared on the outside. The prisoner (Vandricourt) who was immediately below had not noticed any unwonted noise, although he did not go to bed till eleven o'clock. Le Chevalier, whose cell was sixteen feet above the level of the court, had also been obliged to construct a rope to descend by; he had plaited it with long strips cut from a pair of

nankeen breeches and the cover of his mattress. Having got into the courtyard during the night by this means, he had to wait till the early morning when bread was brought in for the prisoners. The concierge of the Temple was in the habit of going back to bed after having admitted the baker, and the gate remained open for "a quarter of an hour and longer, while bread was being delivered at the wickets."

People certainly escaped from the Temple as much as from any other prison. The history of the old tower records many instances of men rescued by their friends in the face of gaolers and guard, but confederates were necessary for the success of these escapes. Given the topography of the Temple in 1807, it would seem impossible for one man alone, with no outside assistance, to have pierced a wall six feet thick in a few hours, and to have crossed the old garden of the grand prior, where in order to reach the street he would either have had to climb the other wall of the enclosure, or to pass the palace and courts to get to the door—that of the Rue du Temple—which, as stated in the official report, remained open every morning for twenty minutes during the baker's visit. The impossibility of success leads us to think that if Le Chevalier triumphed over so many obstacles, it was because some one made it easy for him to do so.

Réal put a man on his track who for ten years had been the closest confidant of the secrets of the police, and had conducted their most delicate affairs. This was Inspector Pasque. With Commissary Beffara,

he set off on the search. Licquet, one of the first to be informed of Le Chevalier's escape, immediately showed Mme. Acquet the letter announcing it, taking care to represent it, confidentially, as his own work. He received in return a copious confession from his grateful prisoner. This time she emptied all the corners of her memory, returning to facts already revealed, adding details, telling of all d'Aché's comings and goings, his frequent journeys to England, and of the manner in which David l'Intrépide crossed the channel. Licquet tried more than all to awaken her memories of Le Chevalier's relations with Parisian society. She knew that several official personages were in the "plot," but unfortunately could not recollect their names, "although she had heard them mentioned, notably by Lefebre, with whom Le Chevalier corresponded on this subject." However, as the detective persisted she pronounced these words, which Licquet eagerly noted :

"One of these personages is in the Senate ; M. Lefebre knows him. Another was in office during the Terror, and can be recognised by the following indications : he frequently sees Mme. Ménard, sister of the widow, Mme. Flahaut, who has married M. de ———, now ambassador to Holland, it is believed. This lady lives sometimes at Falaise and sometimes in Paris, where she is at present. This individual is small, dark and slightly humped ; he has great intellect, and possesses the talent for intrigue in a high degree. The other personages are rich. The declarant cannot state their number. Le Chevalier in-

formed her that affairs were going well in Paris, that they were awaiting news of the Prince's arrival to declare for him."

Licquet compelled Mme. Acquet to repeat these important declarations before the prefect, and on the 23d of December, she signed them in Savoye-Rollin's office. The same evening Licquet tried to put names to all these anonymous persons. With the prisoner by his side and the imperial almanac in his hand, he went over the list of senators, great dignitaries and notabilities of the army and the administration, but without success. "The names that were pronounced before her," he wrote to Réal, "are effaced from her memory; perhaps Lefebvre will tell us who they are."

The lawyer, in fact, since he saw things becoming blacker, had been very loquacious with Licquet. He cried with fear when in the prefect's presence, and promised to tell all he knew, begging them to have pity on "the unfortunate father of a family." He spoke so plainly, this time, that Licquet himself was astounded. The lawyer had it indeed from Le Chevalier, that the day the Duc de Berry landed in France, the Emperor would be arrested by two officers "who were always near his person, and who each of them would count on an army of forty thousand men!" And when Lefebvre was brought before the prefect to repeat this accusation, and gave the general's names, Savoye-Rollin was so petrified with astonishment that he dared not insert them in the official report of the inquiry; furthermore, he refused to write them with his own hand, and compelled the lawyer himself to



put on paper this blasphemy before which official pens recoiled.

“Lefebre insists,” wrote Savoye-Rollin to Réal, “that Le Chevalier would never tell him the names of all the conspirators. Lefebre has, however, given two names, one of which is so important and seems so improbable, that I cannot even admit a suspicion of it. Out of respect for the august alliance which he has contracted, I have not put his name in the report of the inquiry; it is added to my letter, in a declaration written and signed by the prisoner.” And in his letter there is a note containing these lines over Lefebre’s signature: “I declare to Monsieur le Prefect de la Seine Inférieure that the two generals whom I did not name in my interrogation to-day and who were pointed out to me by M. le Chevalier, are the Generals Bernadotte and Masséna.”

Bernadotte and Masséna! At the ministry of police they pretended to laugh heartily at this foolish notion; but perhaps some who knew the “true inwardness” of certain old rivalries—Fouché above all—thought it less absurd and impossible than they admitted it to be. This fiend of a man, with his way of searching to the bottom of his prisoners’ consciences, was just the one to find out that in France Bonaparte was the sole partisan of the Empire. In any case these were not ideas to be circulated freely, and from that day Réal promised himself that if Pasque and Beffara succeeded in finding Le Chevalier, he should never divulge them before any tribunal.



The two agents had established a system of surveillance on all the roads of Normandy, but without much hope: Le Chevalier, who had escaped so many spies and got out of so many snares during the past eight years, was considered to bear, as it were, a charmed life. He was taken, however, and as his escape had seemed to be the result of the detective's schemes, so in the manner in which he again fell into the hands of Réal's agents was Licquet's handiwork again recognised. The latter, indeed, was the only one who knew enough to make the capture possible. In his long conversation with Mme. Acquet, he had learned that in leaving Caen in the preceding May, Le Chevalier had confided his five-year-old son to his servant Marie Humon, with orders to take him to his friend the *Sieur* Guilbot at Evreux. At the beginning of August the child had been taken to Paris and placed with Mme. Thiboust, Le Chevalier's sister-in-law.

In what way was the son used to capture the father? We have never been able thoroughly to clear up this mystery. The accounts that have been given of this great detective feat are evidently fantastic, and remain inexplicable without the intervention of a comrade betraying Le Chevalier after having given him unequivocal proofs of devotion. Thus, it has been said that Réal, "having recourse to extraordinary means," could have caused the arrest of "the sister-in-law and daughter of the fugitive, and their incarceration in the prisons of Caen with filthy and disreputable women." Le Chevalier, informed of

their incarceration—by whom?—would have offered himself in place of the two women, and the police would have accepted the bargain.

Told in this manner, the story does not at all agree with the documents we have been able to collect. Le Chevalier had no daughter, and no trace is to be found of the transference of Mme. Thiboust to Caen. The other version is no more admissible. Scarcely out of the Temple, we are assured, the outlaw would not have been able to resist the desire to see his son, and would have sent to beg Mme. Thiboust—by whom again?—to bring him to the Passage des Panoramas. Naturally the police would follow the woman and child, and Le Chevalier be taken in their arms. It is difficult to imagine so sharp a man setting such a childish trap for himself, even if his adventurous life had not accustomed him for a long time to live apart from his family.

The truth is certainly far otherwise. It is necessary, first of all, to know who let Le Chevalier out of prison. Mme. de Noël, one of his relations, said later, that “they had offered employment to the prisoner if he would denounce his accomplice,” which offer he haughtily refused. As his presence was embarrassing, his gaolers were ordered “to let him go out on parole in the hope that he would not come back,” and could then be condemned for escaping. Le Chevalier profited by the favour, but returned at the appointed time. This toleration was not at all surprising in this strange prison, the theatre of so many adventures that will always remain mysteries.

Desmarets tells how the concierge Boniface allowed an important prisoner, Sir Sidney Smith, to leave the Temple, "to walk, take baths, dine in town, and even go out hunting ;" the commodore never failed to return to sleep in his cell, and "took back his parole in reentering."

It was necessary then, for some one to undertake to get Le Chevalier out of the Temple, as he would not break his parole when he was outside ; and this explains the simulated escape. What cannot be established, unfortunately, is the part taken by Fouché and Réal. Were they the instigators or the dupes ? Did they esteem it better to feign ignorance, or was it in reality the act of subalterns working unknown to their chiefs ? In any case, no one for a moment believed in the wall two yards thick bored through in one night by the aid of a fork, any more than in the rope-ladder made from a pair of nankeen breeches. Réal, in revenge, dismissed the concierge of the prison, put the gaoler Savard in irons, and exacted a report on "all the circumstances that could throw any light on the acquaintances the prisoner must have had in the prison to facilitate his escape."

It seems very probable that Licquet, either directly or through an agent like Perlet, in whom Le Chevalier had the greatest confidence, had had a hand in this escape. As soon as the prisoner was free, as soon as Mme. Acquet had given up all her secrets as the price of her lover's liberty, it only remained to secure him again, and the means employed to gain this end must have been somewhat discreditable, for

in the reports sent to the Emperor, who was daily informed of the progress of the affair, things were manifestly misrepresented. The following facts cannot be questioned: Le Chevalier had found in Paris "an impenetrable retreat where he could boldly defy all the efforts of the police;" Fouché, guessing at the feelings of the fugitive, issued a warrant against Mme. Thiboust. By whom was Le Chevalier informed in his hiding-place of his sister-in-law's arrest? It is here, evidently, that a third person intervened. However that may be, the outlaw wrote to Fouché "offering to show himself as soon as the woman who acted as a mother to his son should be set at liberty." Fouché had Mme. Thiboust brought before him, and gave her a safe conduct of eight days for Le Chevalier, with positive and reiterated assurance that he would give him a passport for England as soon as he should deliver himself up.

Mme. Thiboust returned home to the Rue des Martyrs, where Le Chevalier came to see her; it was the evening of the 5th of January, 1808. He covered his little son with kisses and put him in bed: the child always remembered the caresses he received that evening. Mme. Thiboust, who did not put much faith in Fouché's promises, begged her brother-in-law to flee. "No, no," he replied; and later on she reported his answer thus: "The minister has kept his promise in setting you at liberty and I must keep mine—honour demands it; to hesitate would be weak, and to fail would be a crime." On the morning of the 6th, persuaded—or pretending to be—that



Fouché was going to assist his crossing to England, he embraced his child and sister-in-law.

"Come," he said, "it is Twelfth-Night, and it is a fine day; have a mass said for us, and get breakfast ready. I shall be back in two hours."

Two hours later Inspector Pasque restored him to the Temple, and saw that he was put "hands and feet in irons, in the most rigorous seclusion, under the surveillance of a police agent who was not to leave him day or night."

The same evening Fouché sent the Emperor a report which contained no mention of the chivalrous conduct of Le Chevalier; it said that "the police had seized this brigand at the house of a woman with whom he had relations, and that they had succeeded in throwing themselves upon him before he could use his weapons." On the morning of the 9th, Commandant Durand, of the staff, presented himself at the Temple, and had the irons removed from the prisoner, who appeared at noon before a military commission in a hall in the staff office, 7 Quoi Voltaire. This expeditious magistracy was so sparing of its paper and ink that it took no notes. It played, in the social organisation, the rôle of a trap into which were thrust such people as were found embarrassing. Some were condemned whose fate is only known because their names have been found scribbled on a torn paper that served as an envelope for police reports.

Le Chevalier was condemned to death; he left the office of the staff at four o'clock and was thrown into the Abbaye to await execution. While the



preparations were being made he wrote the following letter to Mme. Thiboust who had been three days without news, and it reached the poor woman the next day.

“*Saturday, 9 January, 1808.*”

“I am going to die, my sister, and I bequeath you my son. I do not doubt that you will show him all a mother’s tenderness and care. I beg you also to have all the firmness and vigilance that I should have had in forming his character and heart.

“Unfortunately, in leaving you the child that is so dear to me, I cannot also leave you a fortune equal to that which I inherited from my parents. I reproach myself, more than for any other fault in my life, for having diminished the inheritance they transmitted to me. Bring him up according to his actual fortune, and make him an artisan, if you must, rather than commit him to the care of strangers.

“One of my greatest regrets in quitting this life, is leaving it without having shown my gratitude to you and your daughter.

“Good-bye; I shall live, I hope, in your remembrance, and you will keep me alive in that of my son.

“LE CHEVALIER.”

Night had come—a cold misty winter night—when the cab that was to take the prisoner to his execution arrived at the door of the Abbaye. It was a long way from Saint-Germain-des-Près to the barriers by way of the Rue du Four and Rue de Grenelle, the Avenue de l’École Militaire, and the tortuous way that is now the Rue Dupleix. The damp fog made the night seem darker; few persons were about, and the scene must have been peculiarly gloomy and for-

bidding. The cab stopped in the angle formed by the barrier of Grenelle, and on the bare ground the condemned man stood with his back to the wall of the enclosure. It was the custom at night executions to place a lighted lantern on the breast of the victim as a target for the men.

It was all over at six o'clock. While the troop was returning to town the grave-diggers took the corpse which had fallen beneath the wall and carried it to the cemetery of Vaugirard; a neighbouring gardener and an old man of eighty, whom curiosity had led to the corpse of this unknown Chouan, served as witnesses to the death certificate.

The death of Le Chevalier put an end to the prosecution of the affair of Quesnay. He was one of those prisoners of whom the grand judge said "that they could not be set at liberty, but that the good of the State required that they should not appear before the judges"; and they feared that by pushing the investigations farther they might bring on some great political trial that would agitate the whole west of France, always ready for an insurrection, and shown in the reports to be organised for a new Chouan outburst. It is certain that d'Aché's capture would have embarrassed Fouché seriously, and in default of causing him to disappear like Le Chevalier, he would much have preferred to see him escape the pursuit of his agents. The absence of these two leaders in the plot would enable him to represent the robbery of June 7th, as a simple act of brigandage which had no political significance whatever.

They therefore imposed silence on the gabblings of Lefebvre, who had become a prey to such incontinence of denunciations that he only stopped them to lament his fate and curse those who had drawn him into the adventure; they moderated Licquet's zeal, and the prefect confided to him the drawing up of the general report of the affair, a task of which he acquitted himself so well that his voluminous work seemed to Fouché "sufficiently luminous and circumstantial to be submitted as it was to his Majesty."

Then they began, but in no haste, to concern themselves with the trial of the other prisoners. It was necessary, according to custom, to interrogate and confront the forty-seven persons imprisoned; of this number the prosecution only held thirty-two, of whom twenty-three were present. These were Flierlé, Harel, Grand-Charles, Fleur d'Épine and Le Héricy who by Allain's orders had attacked the waggon; the Marquise de Combray, her daughter and Lefebvre, instigators of the crime; Gousset the carrier; Alexandre Buquet, Placène, Vannier, Langelley, who had received the money; Chauvel and Lanoë as accomplices, and the innkeepers of Louvigny, d'Aubigny and elsewhere who had entertained the brigands. Those absent were d'Aché, Allain, Le Lorault called "La Jeunesse," Joseph Buquet, the Dupont girl, and the friends of Le Chevalier or Lefebvre who were compromised by the latter's revelations—Courmaceul, Révérend, Dusaussay, etc., Grenthe, called "Cœur-le-Roi," had died in the conciergerie during the enquiry. Mme. de Com-

bray's gardener, Chatel, had committed suicide a few days after his arrest. As to Placide d'Aché and Bonnœil, it was decided not to bring them to trial but to take them later before a military commission. Everything was removed that could give the trial political significance.

Mme. de Combray, who was at last enlightened as to the kind of interest taken in her by Licquet, and awakened from the illusions that the detective had so cleverly nourished, had been able to communicate directly with her family. Her son Timoléon had never approved of her political actions and since the Revolution had stayed away from Tournebut; but as soon as he heard of their arrest he hurried to Rouen to be near his mother and brother in prison. The letters he exchanged with Bonnœil, as soon as it was permitted, show a strong sense of the situation on the part of both, irreproachable honesty and profound friendship. This family, whom it suited Licquet to represent as consisting of spiteful, dissolute or misguided people, appears in a very different light in this correspondence. The two brothers were full of respect for their mother, and tenderly attached to their sister: unfortunate and guilty as she was, they never reproached her, nor made any allusion to facts well-known and forgiven. They were all leagued against the common enemy, Acquet, whom they considered the cause of all their suffering. This man had returned from the Temple strengthened by the cowardly service he had rendered, and entered Donnay in triumph; he did not try to conceal his joy at

all the catastrophes that had overtaken the Combrays, and treated them as vanquished enemies. The family held a council. The advice of Bonnœil and Timoléon, as well as of the Marquise, was to sacrifice everything to save Mme. Acquet. They knew that her husband's denunciations made her the chief culprit, and that the accusation would rest almost entirely on her. They determined to appeal to Chauveau-Lagarde, whom the perilous honour of defending Marie-Antoinette before the Revolutionary tribunal had rendered illustrious. The great advocate undertook the defence of Mme. Acquet and sent a young secretary named Ducolombier, who usually lived with him, to Rouen to study the case—"an intriguer calling himself doctor," wrote Licquet scornfully. Ducolombier stayed in Rouen and set himself to examine the condition of the Combrays' fortune. Mme. de Combray had consented some years back to the sale of a part of her property, and Timoléon, in the hope of averting financial disaster and being of use to his mother by diminishing her responsibility, had succeeded in having a trustee appointed for her.

The matter was brought to Rouen and it was there that, "for the safety of the State," the trial took place that excited all Normandy in advance. Curiosity was greatly aroused by the crime committed by "ladies of the château," and surprising revelations were expected, the examination having lasted more than a year and having brought together an army of witnesses from around Falaise and Tournebut. Mme. de Combray's house in the Rue des Carmel-



ites had become the headquarters of the defence. Mlle. Querey had come out of prison after several weeks' detention, and was there looking after the little Acquets, who had been kept at the pension Du Saussay in ignorance of what was going on around them: the three children still suffered from the ill-treatment they had received in infancy. Timoléon also lived in the Rue des Carmelites when the interests of his family did not require his presence in Falaise or Paris. There, also, lived Ducolombier, who had organised a sort of central office in the house where the lawyers of the other prisoners could come and consult. Mme. de Combray had chosen Maître Gady de la Vigne of Rouen to defend her; Maître Denise had charge of Flierlé's case, and Maître le Bouvier was to speak for Lefebvre and Placène.

Chauveau-Lagarde arrived in Rouen on December 1, 1808. He had scarcely done so when he received a long epistle from Acquet de Férolles, in which the unworthy husband tried to dissuade him from undertaking the defence of his wife, and to ruin the little testimony for the defence that Ducolombier had collected. It seems that this scoundrelly proceeding immediately enlightened the eminent advocate as to the preliminaries of the drama, for from this day he proved for the Combray family not only a brilliant advocate, but a friend whose devotion never diminished.

The trial opened on December 15th in the great hall of the Palais. A crowd, chiefly peasants, collected as soon as the doors were opened in the part

reserved for the public. A platform had been raised for the twenty-three prisoners, among whom all eyes searched for Mme. Acquet, very pale, indifferent or resigned, and Mme. de Combray, very much animated and with difficulty induced by her counsel to keep silent. Besides the president, Carel, the court was composed of seven judges, of whom three were military; the imperial and special Procurer-General, Chopais-Marivaux, occupied the bench.

From the beginning it was evident that orders had been given to suppress everything that could give political colour to the affair. As neither d'Aché, Le Chevalier, Allain nor Bonnœil was present, nor any of the men who could claim the honour of being treated as conspirators and not as brigands, the judges only had the small fry of the plot before them, and the imperial commissary took care to name the chiefs only with great discretion. He did it by means of epithets, and in a melodramatic tone that caused the worthy people who jostled each other in the hall to shiver with terror.

Never had the gilded panels, which since the time of Louis XII had formed the ceiling of the great hall of the Palais, heard such astonishing eloquence; for three hours the Procurer Chopais-Marivaux piled up his heavy sentences, pretentious to the point of unintelligibility. When, after having recounted the facts, the magistrate came to the flight of Mme. Acquet and her sojourn with the Vanniers and Langelley, and it was necessary without divulging Licquet's proceedings to tell of her arrest, he became altogether in-

comprehensible. He must have thought himself lucky in not having before him, on the prisoners' bench, a man bold enough to show up the odious subterfuges that had been used in order to entrap the conspirators and obtain their confessions ; there is no doubt that such a revelation would have gained for the two guilty women, if not the leniency of the judges, the sympathy at least of the public, who all over the province were awaiting with anxious curiosity the slightest details of the trial. The gazettes had been ordered to ignore it ; the *Journal de Rouen* only spoke of it once to state that, as it lacked space to reproduce the whole trial, it preferred to abstain altogether ; and but for a few of Licquet's notes, nothing would be known of the character of the proceedings.

The interrogation of the accused and the examination of the witnesses occupied seven sittings. On Thursday, December 22d, the Procurer-General delivered his charge. The prosecution tried above all to show up the antagonism existing between Mme. de Combray and M. Acquet de Férolles. The latter's denunciations had borne fruit ; the Marquise was represented as having tried "to get rid of her son-in-law by poisoning his drink." And the old story of the bottles of wine sent to Abbé Clarisse and of his inopportune death were revived ; all the unpleasant rumours that had formerly circulated around Donnay were amplified, made grosser, and elevated to the position of accomplished facts. It was decided that poison "was a weapon familiar to the Marquise of

Combray," and as, after having replied satisfactorily to all the first questions asked her, she remained mute on this point, a murmur of disapprobation ran round the audience, to the great joy of Licquet. "The prisoner," he notes, "whose sex and age at first rendered her interesting, has lost to-day every vestige of popularity."

We know nothing of Mme. Acquet's examination, and but little of Chauveau-Lagarde's pleading; a leaf that escaped from his portfolio and was picked up by Mme. de Combray gives a few particulars. This paper has some pencilled notes, and two or three questions written to Mme. Acquet on the prisoners' bench, to which she scrawled a few words in reply. We find there a sketch of the theme which the advocate developed, doubtless to palliate his client's misconduct.

"Mme. Acquet is reproached with her liaisons with Le Chevalier; she can answer—or one can answer for her—that she suffered ill-treatment of all kinds for four years from a man who was her husband only from interest, so much so that he tried to get rid of her. . . . Fearful at one time of being poisoned, at another of having her brains dashed out, . . . her suit for separation had brought her in touch with Le Chevalier, whom she had not known until her husband let him loose on her in order to bring about an understanding. . . ."

During the fifteen sittings of the court a restless crowd filled the hall, the courts of the Palais, and the narrow streets leading to it. At eight o'clock in the



morning of December 30th, the president, Carel, declared the trial closed, and the court retired to "form its opinions." Not till three o'clock did the bell announce the return of the magistrates. The verdict was immediately pronounced. Capital punishment was the portion of Mme. Acquet, Flierlé, Lefebvre, Harel, Grand-Charles, Fleur d'Épine, Le Héricey, Gautier-Boismale, Lemarchand and Alexandre Buquet. The Marquise de Combray was condemned to twenty-two years' imprisonment in irons, and so were Lerouge, called Bornet, Vannier and Bureau-Placène. The others were acquitted, but had to be detained "for the decision of his Excellency, the minister-of-police." The Marquise was, besides, to restore to the treasury the total sum of money taken. Whilst the verdict was being read, the people crowded against the barriers till they could no longer move, eagerly scanning the countenances of the two women. The old Marquise, much agitated, declaimed in a loud voice against the Procurer-General: "Ah! the monster! The scoundrel! How he has treated us!"

Mme. Acquet, pale and impassive, seemed oblivious of what was going on around her. When she heard sentence of death pronounced against her, she turned towards her defender, and Chauveau-Lagarde, rising, asked for a reprieve for his client. Although she had been in prison for fourteen months, she was, he said, "in an interesting condition." There was a murmur of astonishment in the hall, and while, during the excitement caused by this declaration, the court deliberated on the reprieve, one of the condemned, Le



Héricey, leapt over the bar, fell with all his weight on the first rows of spectators, and by kicks and blows, aided by the general bewilderment, made a path for himself through the crowd, and amid shouts and shoves had already reached the door when a gendarme nabbed him in passing and threw him back into the hall, where, trampled on and overcome with blows, he was pushed behind the bar and taken away with the other condemned prisoners. The reprieve asked for Mme. Acquet was pronounced in the midst of the tumult, the crush at the door of the great hall being so great that many were injured.

The verdict, which soon became known all over the town, was in general ill received. If the masses showed a dull satisfaction in the punishment of the Combray ladies, saying "that neither rank nor riches had counted, and that, guilty like the others, they were treated like the others," the bourgeois population of Rouen, still very indulgent to the royalists, disapproved of the condemnation of the two women, who had only been convicted of a crime by which neither of them had profited. The reprieve granted to Mme. Acquet, "whose declaration had deceived no one," seemed a good omen, indicating a commutation of her sentence. The nine "brigands" condemned to death received no pity. Lefebvre was not known in Rouen, and his attitude during the trial had aroused no sympathy; the others were but vulgar actors in the drama, and only interested the populace hungry for a spectacle on the scaffold. The executions would take place immediately, the judgments pronounced by the special

court being without appeal, like those of the former revolutionary tribunals.

The nine condemned men were taken to the conciergerie. It was night when their "toilet" was begun. The high-executioner, Charles-André Ferey, of an old Norman family of executioners, had called on his cousins Joanne and Desmarets to help him, and while the scaffold was being hastily erected on the Place du Vieux-Marché, they made preparations in the prison. In the anguish of this last hour on earth Flierlé's courage weakened. He sent a gaoler to the imperial procurer to ask "if a reprieve would be granted to any one who would make important revelations." On receiving a negative reply the German seemed to resign himself to his fate. "Since that is the case," he said, "I will carry my secret to the tomb with me."

The doors of the conciergerie did not open until seven in the evening. By the light of torches the faces of the condemned were seen in the cart, moving above the crowds thronging the narrow streets. The usual route from the prison to the scaffold was by the Rue du Gros-Horloge, and this funeral march by torchlight and execution at midnight in December must have been a terrifying event. The crowd, kept at a distance, probably saw nothing but the glimmering light of the torches in the misty air, and the shadowy forms moving on the platform. According to the *Journal de Rouen* of the next day, Flierlé mounted first, then Harel, Grand-Charles, Fleur d'Épine and Le Héricey who took part with him in

the attack on June 7th. Lefebvre "passed" sixth. The knife struck poor Gautier-Boismale badly, as well as Alexandre Buquet, who died last. The agony of these two unfortunates was horrible, prolonged as it was by the repairs necessary for the guillotine to continue its work. The bloody scene did not end till half-past eight in the morning.

The next day, December 31st, the exhibition on the scaffold of Mme. de Combray, Placène, Vannier, and Lerouge, all condemned to twenty-two years' imprisonment, was to take place. But when they went to the old Marquise's cell she was found in such a state of exasperation, fearful crises of rage being succeeded by deep dejection, that they had to give up the idea of removing her. The three men alone were therefore tied to the post, where they remained for six hours. As soon as they returned to the conciergerie they were sent in irons to the House of Detention at the general hospital, whence they were to go to the convict prison.

The Marquise had not twenty-two years to live. The thought of ending her days in horrible Bicêtre with thieves, beggars and prostitutes; the humiliation of having been defeated, deceived and made ridiculous in the eyes of all Normandy; and perhaps more than all, the sudden comprehension that it had all been a game, that the Revolution would triumph in the end, that she, a great and powerful lady—noble, rich, a royalist—was treated the same as vulgar criminals, was so cruel a blow, that it was the general impression that she would succumb to it. It is impossible now-

adays to realise what an effect these revelations must have produced on a mind obstinately set against all democratic realities. For nearly a month the Marquise remained in a state of stupefaction; from the day of her condemnation till January 15th it was impossible to get her to take any kind of nourishment. She knew that they were watching for the moment when she would be strong enough to stand the pillory, and perhaps she had resolved to die of hunger. There had been some thought—and this compassionate idea seems to have originated with Licquet—of sparing the aged woman this supreme agony, but the Procurer-General showed such bitter zeal in the execution of the sentence, that the prefect received orders from Réal to proceed. He writes on January 29th: "I am informed of her condition daily. She now takes light nourishment, but is still extremely feeble; we could not just now expose this woman to the pillory without public scandal."

What was most feared was the indignation of the public at sight of the torture uselessly inflicted on an old woman who had already been sufficiently punished. The prefect's words, "without scandal," showed how popular feeling in Rouen had revolted at the verdict. More than one story got afloat. As the details of the trial were very imperfectly known, no journal having published the proceedings, it was said that the Marquise's only crime was her refusal to denounce her daughter, and widespread pity was felt for this unhappy woman who was considered a martyr to maternal love and royalist faith. Perhaps some of



this universal homage was felt even in the prison, for towards the middle of February the Marquise seemed calmer and morally strengthened. The authorities profited by this to order her punishment to proceed. It was February the 17th, and as one of her "attacks" was feared, they prudently took her by surprise. She was told that Dr. Ducolombier, coming from Chauveau-Lagarde, asked to see her at the wicket. She went down without suspicion and was astonished to find in place of the man she expected, two others whom she had never seen. One was the executioner Ferey, who seized her hands and tied her. The doors opened, and seeing the gendarmes, the cart and the crowd, she understood, and bowed her head in resignation.

On the Place du Vieux-Marché the scaffold was raised, and a post to which the text of the verdict was affixed. The prisoner was taken up to the platform; she seemed quite broken, thin, yet very imposing, with her still black hair, and her air of "lady of the manor." She was dressed in violet silk, and as she persisted in keeping her head down, her face was hidden by the frills of her bonnet. To spare her no humiliation Ferey pinned them up; he then made her sit on a stool and tied her to the post, which forced her to hold up her head.

What she saw at the foot of the scaffold brought tears of pride to her eyes. In the first row of the crowd that quietly and respectfully filled the place, ladies in sombre dresses were grouped as close as possible to the scaffold, as if to take a voluntary part in



the punishment of the old Chouanne ; and during the six hours that the exhibition lasted the ladies of highest rank and most distinguished birth in the town came by turns to keep her company in her agony ; some of them even spread flowers at the foot of the scaffold, thus transforming the disgrace into an apotheosis.

The heart of the Marquise, which had not softened through seventeen months of torture and anxiety, melted at last before this silent homage ; tears were seen rolling down her thin cheeks, and the crowd was touched to see the highest ladies in the town sitting round this old unhappy woman, and saluting her with solemn courtesies.

At nightfall Mme. de Combray was taken back to the conciergerie ; later in the evening she was sent to Bicêtre, and several days afterwards Chopais-Mari-vaux, thinking he had served the Master well, begged as the reward of his zeal for the cross of the Legion of Honour.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FATE OF D'ACHÉ

D'ACHÉ, however, had not renounced his plans ; the arrest of Le Chevalier, Mme. de Combray and Mme. Acquet was not enough to discourage him. It was, after all, only one stake lost, and he was the sort to continue the game. It is not even certain that he took the precaution, when Licquet was searching for him all over Normandy, to leave the Château of Montfiquet at Mandeville, where he had lived since his journey to England in the beginning of 1807. Ten months after the robbery of Quesnay he was known to be in the department of the Eure ; Licquet, who had just terminated his enquiry, posted to Louviers ; d'Aché, he found, had been there three days previously. From where had he come ? From Tournebut, where, in spite of the search made, he could have lived concealed for six months in some well-equipped hiding-place ? Unlikely as this seems, Licquet was inclined to believe it, so much was his own cunning disconcerted by the audacious cleverness of his rival. The letter in which he reports to Réal his investigation in the Eure, is stamped with deep discouragement ; he did not conceal the fact that the pursuit of d'Aché was a task as deceptive as it was useless. Perhaps he also thought that Le Chevalier's

case was a precedent to be followed; d'Aché would have been a very undesirable prisoner to bring before a tribunal, and to get rid of him without scandal would be the best thing for the State. Licquet felt that an excess of zeal, bringing on a spectacular arrest such as that of Georges Cadoudal, would be ill-received in high quarters, and he therefore showed some nonchalance in his search for the conspirator.

D'Aché, meanwhile, showed little concern on learning of the capture of his accomplices. Lost in his illusions he took no care for his own safety, and remained at Mandeville, organising imaginary legions on paper, arranging the stages of the King's journey to Paris, and discussing with the Montfiquets certain points of etiquette regarding the Prince's stay at their château on the day following his arrival in France. One day, however, when they were at table—it was in the spring of 1808—a stranger arrived at the Château de Mandeville, and asked for M. Alexandre (the name taken by d'Aché, it will be remembered, at Bayeux). D'Aché saw the man himself, and thinking his manner suspicious, and his questions indiscreet, he treated him as a spy and showed him the door, but not before the intruder had launched several threats at him.

This occurrence alarmed M. de Montfiquet, and he persuaded his guest to leave Mandeville for a time. During the following night they both started on foot for Rubercy, where M. Gilbert de Mondejen, a great friend and confidant of d'Aché's, was living in hiding from the police in the house of a Demoiselle Genne-

ville. This old lady, who was an ardent royalist, welcomed the fugitives warmly ; they were scarcely seated at breakfast, however, when a servant gave the alarm. " Here come the soldiers ! " she cried.

D'Aché and Mondejen rushed from the room and bounded across the porch into the courtyard just as the gendarmes burst in at the gate. They would have been caught if a horse had not slipped on the wet pavement and caused some confusion, during which they shut themselves into a barn, escaped by a door at the back, and jumping over hedges and ditches gained a little wood on the further side of the Tortoue brook.

But d'Aché had been seen, and from that day he was obliged to resume his wandering existence, living in the woods by day and tramping by night. He was entirely without resources, for he had no money, but was certain of finding a refuge, in case of need, in this region where malcontents abounded and all doors opened to them. In this way he reached the forest of Serisy, a part of which had formerly belonged to the Montfiquets ; it was here that the abandoned mines were situated that had been mentioned to Licquet as Allain's place of refuge. Though obliged to abandon the Château de Mandeville, where, as well as at Rubercy, the gendarmes had made a search, d'Aché did not lack shelter around Bayeux. A Madame Chivré, who lived on the outskirts of the town, had for fifteen years been the providence of the most desperate Chouans, and d'Aché was sure of a welcome from her ; but he stayed only a few days.

Mme. Amfrye also assisted him. This woman who never went out except to church, and was seen every morning with eyes downcast, walking to Saint-Patrice with her servant carrying her prayer book, was one of the fiercest royalists of the region. She looked after the emigrants' funds and took charge of their correspondence. Once a week a priest rang her door-bell; it was the Abbé Nicholas, curé of Vierville, a little fishing village. The Abbé, whose charity was proverbial, and accounted for his visits to Mme. Amfrye, was in reality a second David l'Intrépide; mass said and his beads told, he got into a boat and went alone to the islands of Saint-Marcouf, where an exchange of letters was made with the English emissaries, the good priest bringing his packet back to Bayeux under his soutane.

D'Aché could also hide with Mademoiselle Dumesnil, or Mlle. Duquesnay de Montfiquet, to both of whom he had been presented by Mme. de Vaubadon, an ardent royalist who had rendered signal service to the party during the worst days of the Terror. She was mentioned among the Normans who had shown most intelligent and devoted zeal for the cause.

Born de Mesnildot, niece of Tourville, she had married shortly before the Revolution M. le Tellier de Vaubadon, son of a member of the Rouen Parliament, a handsome man, amiable, loyal, elegant, and most charmingly sociable. She was medium-sized, not very pretty, but attractive, with a very white skin, tawny hair, and graceful carriage. Two sons were born of this union, and on the outbreak of the Revo-



lution M. de Vaubadon emigrated. After several months of retreat in the Château of Vaubadon, the young woman tired of her grass-widowhood, which seemed as if it would be eternal, and returned to Bayeux where she had numerous relations. The Terror was over; life was reawakening, and the gloomy town gave itself up to it gladly. "Never were balls, suppers, and concerts more numerous, animated and brilliant in Bayeux than at this period." Mme. de Vaubadon's success was marked. When some of her papers were seized in the year IX the following note from an adorer was found: "All the men who have had the misfortune to see you have been mortally wounded. I therefore implore you not to stay long in this town, not to leave your apartment but at dusk, and veiled. We hope to cure our invalids by cold baths and refreshing drinks; but be gracious enough not to make incurables."

So that her children should not be deprived of their father's fortune, which the nation could sequester as the property of an *émigré*, Mme. de Vaubadon, like many other royalists, had sued for a divorce. All those who had had recourse to this extremity had asked for an annulment of the decree as soon as their husbands could return to France, and had resumed conjugal relations. But Mme. de Vaubadon did not consider her divorce a mere formality; she intended to remain free, and even brought suit against her husband for the settlement of her property. This act, which was severely criticised by the aristocracy of Bayeux, alienated many of her friends and placed her

somewhat on the outskirts of society. From that time lovers were attributed to her, and it is certain that her conduct became more light. She scarcely concealed her liaison with Guérin de Bruslart, the leader of the Norman Chouans, the successor of Frotté, and a true type of the romantic brigand, who managed to live for ten years in Normandy and even in Paris, without falling into one of the thousand traps set for him by Fouché. Bruslart arrived at his mistress's house at night, his belt bristling with pistols and poniards, and "always ready for a desperate hand-to-hand fight."

Together with this swaggerer Mme. de Vaubadon received a certain Ollendon, a Chouan of doubtful reputation, who was said to have gone over to the police through need of money. Mme. de Vaubadon, since her divorce, had herself been in a precarious position. She had dissipated her own fortune, which had already been greatly lessened by the Revolution. She was now reduced to expedients, and seeing closed to her the doors of many of the houses in Bayeux to which her presence had formerly given tone, she went to Caen and settled in the Rue Guilbert nearly opposite the Rue Coupée.

Whether it was that Ollendon had decided to profit by her relations with the Chouans, or that Fouché had learned that she was in need and would not refuse good pay for her services, Mme. de Vaubadon was induced to enter into communication with the police. The man whom in 1793 Charlotte Corday had immortally branded with a word, Senator Doulcet de

Pontécoulant, undertook to gain this recruit for the imperial government.

If certain traditions are to be trusted, Pontécoulant, who was supposed to be one of Acquet de Férolles' protectors, had insinuated to Mme. de Vaubadon that "her intrigues with the royalists had long been known in high places, and an order for her arrest and that of d'Aché, who was said to be her lover, was about to be issued." "You understand," he added, "that the Emperor is as merciful as he is powerful, that he has a horror of punishment and only wants to conciliate, but that he must crush, at all costs, the aid given to England by the agitation on the coasts. Redeem your past. You know d'Aché's retreat: get him to leave France; his return will be prevented, but the certainty of his embarkation is wanted, and you will be furnished with agents who will be able to testify to it."

In this way Mme. de Vaubadon would be led to the idea of revealing d'Aché's retreat, believing that it was only a question of getting him over to England; but facts give slight support to this sugared version of the affair. After the particularly odious drama that we are about to relate, all who had taken part in it tried to prove for themselves a moral alibi, and to throw on subordinates the horror of a crime that had been long and carefully prepared. Fouché, whom few memories disturbed, was haunted by this one, and attributed to himself a rôle as chivalrous as unexpected. According to him, d'Aché, in extremity, had tried a bold stroke. This man, who, since

Georges' death, had so fortunately escaped all the spies of France, had of his own will suddenly presented himself before the Minister of Police, to convert him to royalist doctrines ! Fouché had shown a loyalty that equalled his visitor's boldness. "I do not wish," he said, "to take advantage of your boldness and have you arrested *hic et nunc* ; I give you three days to get out of France ; during this time I will ignore you completely ; on the fourth day I will set my men on you, and if you are taken you must bear the consequences."

This is honourable, but without doubt false. Besides the improbability of this conspirator offering himself without reason to the man who had hunted him so long, it is difficult to imagine that such a meeting could have taken place without any mention of it being made in the correspondence in the case. None of the letters exchanged between the Minister of Police and the prefects makes any allusion to this visit ; it seems to accord so little with the character of either that it must be relegated to the ranks of the legends with which Fouché sought to hide his perfidies. It is certain that a snare was laid for d'Aché, that Mme. de Vaubadon was the direct instrument, that Pontécoulant acted as intermediary between the minister and the woman ; but the inventor of the stratagem is unknown. A simple recital of the facts will show that all three of those named are worthy to have combined in it.

Public rumour asserts that Mme. de Vaubadon had been d'Aché's mistress, but she did not now know



where he was hidden. In the latter part of August, 1809, she went to Bayeux to find out from her friend Mlle. Duquesnay de Montfiquet if d'Aché was in the neighbourhood, and if so, with whom. Mlle. de Montfiquet, knowing Mme. de Vaubadon to be one of the outlaw's most intimate friends, told her that he had been living in the town for a long time, and that she went to see him every week. The matter ended there, and after paying some visits, Mme. de Vaubadon returned by coach the same evening to Caen.

It became known later that she had a long interview with Pontécoulant the next day, during which it was agreed that she should deliver up d'Aché, in return for which Fouché would pay her debts and give her a pension. But she attached a strange condition to the bargain; she refused "to act with the authorities, and only undertook to keep her promise if they put at her disposal, while leaving her completely independent, a non-commissioned officer of gendarmerie, whom she was to choose herself, and who would blindly obey her orders, without having to report to his chiefs." Perhaps the unfortunate woman hoped to retain d'Aché's life in her keeping, and save him by some subterfuge, but she had to deal with Pontécoulant, Réal and Fouché, three experienced players whom it was difficult to deceive. They accepted her conditions, only desiring to get hold of d'Aché, and determined to do away with him as soon as they should know where to catch him.

On Thursday, September 5th, Mme. de Vaubadon



reappeared in Bayeux, and went to Mlle. Duquesnay de Montfiquet to tell her of the imminent danger d'Aché was in, and to beg her to ensure his safety by putting her in communication with him. We now follow the story of a friend of Mme. de Vaubadon's family who tried to prove her innocent, if not of treachery, at least of the crime that was the result of it. Mlle. de Montfiquet had great confidence in her friend's loyalty, but not in her discretion, and obstinately refused to take Mme. de Vaubadon to d'Aché. The former, fearing that action would be taken without her, returned to the charge, but encountered a firm determination to be silent that rendered her insistence fruitless. In despair at the possibility of having aroused suspicions that might lead to the disappearance of d'Aché, she resolved not to leave the place.

"I do not wish to be seen in Bayeux," she said to her friend, "I am going to sleep here."

"But I have only one bed."

"I will share it with you."

During the night, as the two women's thoughts kept them from sleeping, Mme. de Vaubadon changed her tactics.

"You have no means of saving him," she hinted, "whilst all my plans are laid. I have at my disposal a boat that for eight or nine hundred francs will take him to England; I have some one to take him to the coast, and two sailors to man the boat. If you will not tell me his retreat, at least make a rendezvous where my guide can meet him. If you refuse he

may be arrested to-morrow, tried, and shot, and the responsibility for his death will fall on you."

Mlle. de Montfiquet gave up; she promised to persuade d'Aché to go to England. It was now Friday, September 6th. It was settled that at ten o'clock in the evening of the following day she herself should take him to the village of Saint-Vigor-le-Grand, at the gates of Bayeux. She would advance alone to meet the guide sent by Mme. de Vaubadon; the men would say "Samson," to which Mlle. de Montfiquet would answer "Félix," and only after the exchange of these words would she call d'Aché, hidden at a distance.

Mme. de Vaubadon returned to Caen, arriving at home before midday. Most of the frequenters of her salon at this period were aspirants for her favours, and among whom was a young man of excellent family, M. Alfred de Formigny, very much in love, and consequently very jealous of Ollendon, who was then supposed to be the favoured lover. In the evening of this day, M. de Formigny went to Mme. de Vaubadon's. He was told that she was not at home, but as he saw a light on the ground floor, and thought he could distinguish the silhouette of a man against the curtains, he watched the house and ascertained that its mistress was having an animated conversation with a visitor whose back only could be seen, and whom he believed to be his rival. Wishing to make sure of it, and determined to have an explanation, he stood sentinel before the door of the house. "Soon a man wrapped in a cloak came out, who, seeing that

he was watched, pulled the folds of it up to his eyes. M. de Formigny, certain that it was Ollendon, threw himself on the man, and forced off the cloak." But he felt very sheepish when he found himself face to face with Foison, quartermaster of gendarmerie, who, not less annoyed, growled out a few oaths, and hastily made off. The same evening M. de Formigny told his adventure to some of his friends, but his indiscretion had no consequences, it seemed, Mme. de Vaubadon's reputation being so much impaired that a new scandal passed unnoticed.

Meanwhile Mlle. de Montfiquet had kept her promise. As soon as her friend left her, she went to Mlle. Dumesnil's, where d'Aché had lived for the last six weeks, and told him of Mme. de Vaubadon's proposition. The offer was so tempting, it seemed so truly inspired by the most zealous and thoughtful affection, and came from so trusted a friend, that he did not hesitate to accept. It appears, however, that he was not in much danger in Bayeux, and took little pains to conceal himself, for on Saturday morning he piously took the sacrament at the church of Saint-Patrice, then returned to Mlle. Dumesnil's and arranged some papers. As soon as it was quite dark that evening Mlle. de Montfiquet came to fetch him, and found him ready to start. He was dressed in a hunting jacket of blue cloth, trousers of ribbed green velvet and a waistcoat of yellow piqué. He put two loaded English pistols in the pockets of his jacket and carried a sword-cane. Mlle. de Montfiquet gave him a little book of "*Pensées Chrétiennes*," in which

she had written her name ; then, accompanied by her servant, she led him across the suburbs to Saint-Vigore-Grand. She found Mme. de Vaubadon's guide at the rendezvous before the church door ; it was Foison, whom she recognised. The passwords exchanged, d'Aché came forward, kissed Mlle. de Montfiquet's hand, bade her adieu, and started with the gendarme. The anxious old lady followed him several steps at a distance, and saw standing at the end of the wall of the old priory of Saint-Vigor, two men in citizen's dress, who joined the travellers. All four took the cross road that led by the farm of Caugy to Villiers-le-Sec. They wished, by crossing the Seule at Reviere, to get to the coast at Luc-sur-Mer, seven leagues from Bayeux, where the embarkation was to take place.

When d'Aché and his companions left Bayeux, Luc-sur-Mer was in a state of excitement. The next day, Sunday, lots were to be drawn for the National Guard, and the young people of the village, knowing that this fête was only "conscription in disguise," had threatened to prevent the ceremony, to surround the Mairie and burn the registers and the recruiting papers. What contributed to the general uneasiness was the fact that four men who were known to be gendarmes in disguise had been hovering about, chiefly on the beach ; they had had the audacity to arrest two gunners, coast-guards in uniform and on duty, and demand their papers. A serious brawl had ensued. At night the same men "suddenly



thrust a dark lantern in the face of every one they met."

M. Boullée, the Mayor of Luc, lived at the hamlet of Notre-Dame-de-la-Délivrande, some distance from the town, and in much alarm at the disturbances watched with his servants through part of the night of the 7th-8th. At one o'clock in the morning, while he was with them in a room on the ground floor, a shot was heard outside and a ball struck the window frame. They rushed to the door, and in the darkness saw a man running away; the cartouche was still burning in the courtyard. M. Boullée immediately sent to the coast-guards to inform them of the fact, and to ask for a reinforcement of two men who did not arrive till near four o'clock. Having passed the night patrolling at some distance from La Délivrande, they had not heard the shot that had alarmed the mayor, but towards half-past three had heard firing and a loud "Help, help!" in the direction of the junction of the road from Bayeux with that leading to the sea.

It was now dawn and M. Boullée, reassured by the presence of the two gunners, resolved to go out and explore the neighbourhood. On the road to Luc, about five hundred yards from his house, a peasant hailed him, and showed him, behind a hayrick almost on the edge of the road, the body of a man. The face had received so many blows as to be almost unrecognisable; the left eye was coming out of the socket; the hair was black, but very grey on the temples, and the beard thin and short. The man lay



on his back, with a loaded pistol on each side, about two feet from the body; the blade and sheath of a sword-cane had rolled a little way off, and near them was the broken butt-end of a double-barrelled gun. On raising the corpse to search the pockets, the hands were found to be strongly tied behind the back. No papers were found that could give any clue to his identity, but only a watch, thirty francs in silver, and a little book on the first page of which was written the name "Duquesnay de Montfiquet."

The growing daylight now made an investigation possible. Traces of blood were found on the road to Luc from the place where the body lay, to its junction with the road to Bayeux, a distance of about two hundred yards. It was evident that the murder had been committed at the spot where the two roads met, and that the assassins had carried the corpse to the fields and behind the hayrick to retard discovery of the crime. The disguised gendarmes whose presence had so disturbed the townsfolk had disappeared. A horse struck by a ball was lying in a ditch. It was raised, and though losing a great deal of blood, walked as far as the village of Mathieu, on the road to Caen, where it was stabled.

These facts having been ascertained, M. Boullée's servants and the peasants whom curiosity had attracted to the spot, escorted the dead body, which had been put on a wheelbarrow, to La Délivrande. It was laid in a barn near the celebrated chapel of pilgrimages, and there the autopsy took place at five in the afternoon. It was found that "death was due

to a wound made by the blade of the sword-cane; the weapon, furiously turned in the body, had lacerated the intestines." Three balls had, besides, struck the victim, and five buckshot had hit him full in the face and broken several teeth; of two balls fired close to the body, one had pierced the chest above the left breast, and the other had broken the left thigh, and one of the murderers had struck the face so violently that his gun had broken against the skull.

The mayor had been occupied with the drawing of lots all day, and only found time to write and inform the prefect of the murder when the doctors had completed their task. He was in great perplexity, for the villagers unanimously accused the gendarmes of the mysterious crime. It was said that at dawn that morning the quartermaster Foison and four of his men had gone into an inn at Mathieu, one of them carrying a gun with the butt-end broken. While breakfasting, these "gentlemen," not seeing a child lying in a closed bed, had taken from a tin box some "yellow coins" which they divided, and the inference drawn was that the gendarmes had plundered a traveller whom they knew to be well-supplied, and sure of impunity since they could always plead a case of rebellion, had got rid of him by murder. This was the sense of the letter sent to Caffarelli by the Mayor of Luc on the evening of the 8th. The next morning Foison appeared at La Délivrande to draw up the report. When Boullée asked him a few questions about the murder, he answered in so arrogant and menacing a tone as to make any enquiry impossible.

Putting on a bold face, he admitted that he had been present at the scene of the crime. He said that while he was patrolling the road to Luc with four of his men, two individuals appeared whom he asked for their papers. One of them immediately fled, and the other discharged his pistols; the gendarmes seized him, and in spite of his desperate resistance succeeded in bringing him down. He stayed dead on the ground, "having been struck several times during the struggle."

"But his pistols were still loaded," said some one.

Foison made no reply.

"But his hands were tied," said the mayor.

Foison tried to deny it.

"Here are the bands," said Boullée, drawing from his pocket the ribbon taken from the dead man's hands. And as Captain Mancel, who presided at the interview, remarked that those were indeed the bands used by gendarmes, Foison left the room with more threats, swearing that he owed an account to no one.

The news of the crime had spread with surprising rapidity, and indignation was great wherever it was heard. In writing to Réal, Caffarelli echoed public feeling :

"How did it happen that four gendarmes were unable to seize a man who had struggled for a long time? How came it that he was, in a way, mutilated? Why, after having killed this man, did they leave him there, without troubling to comply with any of the necessary formalities? Ask these questions, M. le Comte; the public is asking them and

finds no answer. What is the reply, if, moreover, as is said, the person was seized, his hands tightly tied behind his back, and then shot? What are the terrible consequences to be expected from these facts if they are true? How will the gendarmes be able to fulfil their duties without fear of being treated as assassins or wild beasts?"

It must be mentioned that as soon as the crime was committed, Foison had gone to Caen and given Pontécoulant the papers found on d'Aché, which contained information as to the political and military situation on the coast of Normandy, and on the possibility of a disembarkation. Pontécoulant had immediately posted off, and on the morning of the 11th told Fouché verbally of the manner in which Foison and Mme. de Vaubadon had acquitted themselves of their mission. It remained to be seen how the public would take things, and Caffarelli's letter presaged no good; what would it be when it became known that the gendarme assassins had acted with the authorisation of the government? Happily, a confusion arose that retarded the discovery of the truth. In the hope of determining the dead man's identity, the Mayor of Luc had exposed the body to view, and many had come to see it, including some people from Caen. Four of these had unanimously recognised the corpse as that of a clock-maker of Paris, named Morin-Cochu, well known at the fairs of Lower Normandy. Fouché allowed the public to follow this false trail, and it was wonderful to see his lieutenants, Desmarets, Veyrat, Réal himself, looking for Morin-



Cochu all over Paris as if they were ignorant of the personality of their victim. And when Morin-Cochu was found alive and well in his shop in the Rue Saint-Denis, which he had not left for four years, they began just as zealously to look for his agent Festau, who might well be the murdered man.

Caffarelli, however, was not to be caught in this clumsy trap. He knew how matters stood now, and showed his indignation. He wrote very courageously to Réal: "You will doubtless ask me, M. le Comte, why I have not tried to show up the truth? My answer is simple: it is publicly rumoured that the expedition of the gendarmes was ordered by M. the Senator Comte de P——, to whom were given the papers found on the murdered man, and who has gone to Paris, no doubt to transmit them to his Excellency the Minister of Police. Ought I not to respect the secret of the authorities?"

And all that had occurred in his department for the two last years that it had not been considered advisable to tell him of, all the irregularities that in his desire for peace he had thought he should shut his eyes to, all the affronts that he had patiently endured, came back to his mind. He felt his heart swell with disgust at cowardly acts, dishonourable tools, and odious snares, and nobly explained his feelings:

"Certainly I am not jealous of executing severe measures and I should like never to have any of that kind to enforce. But I owe it to myself as well as to the dignity of my office not to remain prefect in name only, and if any motives whatever can destroy



confidence in me to this point on important matters I must simply be told of it and I shall know how to resign without murmuring. It is not permissible to treat a man whose honesty and zeal cannot be mistaken, in the manner in which I have been treated for some time. I cannot conceal from you, M. le Comte, that I am keenly wounded at the measures that have been taken towards me. It has been thought better to put faith in people of tarnished and despicable reputation, the terror of families, than in a man who has only sought the good of the country he represented, and known no other ambition than that of acting wisely."

And this letter, so astonishing from the pen of an imperial prefect, was a sort of revenge for all the poor people for whom the police had laid such odious traps; it would remind Fouché of all the Licquets and Foisons who in the exercise of justice found matter for repugnant comedies. It was surprising that Licquet had had no hand in the affair of La Délivrande. Had he breathed it to Réal? It is possible, though there is no indication of his interference, albeit his manner is recognised in the scenario of the snare to which d'Aché fell a victim, and in the fact that he appeared at the end, coming from Rouen with his secretary Dupont, and the husband of the woman Levasseur who was said to have been d'Aché's mistress.

On the morning of September 23d, a meeting took place at seven o'clock at the Mayor of Luc's house. The doctors who had held the autopsy were there,

Captain Mancel and Foison, who was in great agitation, although he tried to hide it, at having to assist at the exhumation of his victim. They started for the cemetery, and the grave-digger did his work. After fifteen minutes the shovel struck the board that covered d'Aché's body, and soon after the corpse was seen. The beard had grown thick and strong. Foison gazed at it. It was indeed the man with whom he had travelled a whole night, chatting amiably while each step brought him nearer to the assassins who were waiting for him. Licquet moved about with complete self-control, talking of the time when he had known the man who lay there, his face swollen but severe, his nose thin as an eagle's beak, his lips tightened. Suddenly the detective remembered a sign that he had formerly noted, and ordered the dead man's boots to be removed. All present could then see that d'Aché's "toe-nails were so grown over into his flesh that he walked on them." Foison also saw, and wishing to brave this corpse, more terrifying for him than for any one else, he stooped and opened the dead lips with the end of his cane. A wave of fetid air struck the assassin full in the face, and he fell backward with a cry of fear.

This incident terminated the enquiry; the body was returned to the earth, and those who had been present at the exhumation started for La Délivrande. Foison walked alone behind the others; no one spoke to him, and when they arrived at the mayor's, where all had been invited to dine, he remained on the

threshold which he dared not cross, knowing that for the rest of his life he would never again enter the house of an honest man.

The same evening at Caen, where everything was known, although Fouché was still looking for Morin-Cochu, the vengeance of the corpse annihilating Foison was the topic of all conversations. There was a certain gaiety in the town, that was proud of its prefect's attitude. When the curtain went up at the theatre, while all the young "swells" were in the orchestra talking of the event that was agitating "society," they saw a blonde woman with a red scarf on her shoulders in one of the boxes. The first one that saw her could not believe his eyes: it was Mme. de Vaubadon! The name was at first whispered, then a murmur went round that at last broke into an uproar. The whole theatre rose trembling, and with raised fists cried: "Down with the murderess! She is the woman with the red shawl; it is stained with d'Aché's blood. Death to her!"

The unhappy woman tried to put on a bold face, and remained calm; it is supposed that Pontécoulant was in the theatre, and perhaps she hoped that he, at least, would champion her. But when she understood that in that crowd, among whom many perhaps had loved her, no one now would defend her, she rose and left her box, while some of the most excited hustled into the corridor to hoot her in passing. She at last escaped and got to her house in the Rue Guilbert, and the next day she left Caen forever.

Less culpable certainly, and now pitied by all to

whom d'Aché's death recalled the affair of Quesnay, Mme. Acquet was spending her last days in the conciergerie at Rouen. After the petition for a reprieve on account of her pregnancy, and the visit of two doctors, who said they could not admit the truth of her plea, Ducolombier used all his efforts to obtain grace from the Emperor. As soon as the sentence was pronounced he had hurried to Paris in quest of means of approaching his Majesty. His relative, Mme. de Saint-Leonard, wife of the Mayor of Falaise, joined him there, and got her relatives in official circles to interest themselves. But the Emperor was then living in a state of continual agitation; Laeken, Mayence and Cassel were as familiar stopping-places as Saint-Cloud and Fontainebleau, and even if a few minutes' audience could be obtained, what hope was there of fixing his attention on the life of an insignificant woman? Chauveau-Lagarde advised the intervention of Mme. Acquet's three girls, the eldest now twelve, and the youngest not eight years old. Mourning garments were hastily bought for them, and they were sent to Paris on January 24th, with a Mlle. Bodinot. Every day they pursued the Emperor's carriage through the town, as he went to visit the manufactories. Timoléon, Mme. de Saint-Léonard, and Mlle. de Séran took turns with the children; they went to Malmaison, to Versailles, to Meudon. At last, on March 2d, at Sèvres, one of the children succeeded in getting to the door of the imperial carriage, and put a petition into the hands of an officer, but it probably never reached the Emperor, for this step that

had cost so much money and trouble remained ineffectual.

There are among Mme. de Combray's papers more than ten drafts of petitions addressed to the Emperor's brothers, to Josephine, and even to foreign princes. But each of them had much to ask for himself, and all were afraid to importune the master. The latter was now in Germany, cutting his way to Vienna, and poor Mme. Acquet would have had slight place in his thoughts in spite of the illusions of her friends, had he ever even heard her name. In April the little Acquets returned to Mme. Dusaussay in Rouen. She wrote to Timoléon :

"I am not surprised that you were not satisfied with the children ; until now they have only been restrained by fear, and the circumstances of the journey to Paris brought them petting and kindness of which they have taken too much advantage. If worse trouble comes to Mme. Acquet, we will do our best to keep them in ignorance of it, and it is to be hoped the same can be done for your mother."

And so all hope of grace seemed lost for the poor woman, and it would have been very easy to forget her in prison, for who could be specially interested in her death ? Neither Fouché, Réal, the prefect nor even Licquet, who, once the verdict was given, seemed to have lost all animosity towards his victims. Only the imperial procurer, Chapais-Marivaux, seemed determined on the execution of the sentence. He had already caused two consultations to be held on the subject of Mme. Acquet's health. The specialists could



not or would not decide upon it, and this gave some hope to Mme. de Combray, who from her cell in Bicêtre still presided over all efforts made for her daughter, and continued to hold a firm hand over her family.

As the Emperor had now entered Vienna in triumph, the Marquise thought it a good time to implore once more the conqueror's pity. She sent for her son Timoléon on June 1st. She had decided to send her two eldest grandchildren to Vienna with their aunt Mme. d'Houël and the faithful Ducolombier, who offered to undertake the long journey. Chauveau-Lagarde drew up a petition for the children to give to Napoleon, and they left Rouen about July 10th, arriving in Vienna the fortnight following the battle of Wagram. Ducolombier at once sought a means of seeing the Emperor. Hurried by the Marquise, who allowed no discussion of the methods that seemed good to her, he had started without recommendations, letters of introduction or promises of an audience, and had to wait for chance to give him a moment's interview with Napoleon. He established himself with Mme. d'Houël and the children at Schœnbrunn, where the imperial quarters were, and by dint of solicitations obtained the privilege of going into the court of the château with other supplicants.

The Emperor was away ; he had wished to revisit the scene of his brilliant victory, and during the whole day Ducolombier and his companions waited his return on the porch of the château. Towards evening the gate opened, the guard took up arms,

drums beat and the Emperor appeared on horseback in the immense courtyard, preceded by his guides and his mameluke, and followed by a numerous staff. The hearts of the poor little Acquets must have beaten fast when they saw this master of the world from whom they were going to beg their mother's life. In a moment the Emperor was upon them; Ducolombier pushed them; they fell on their knees.

Seeing these mourning figures, Napoleon thought he had before him the widow and orphans of some officer killed during the campaign. He raised the children kindly.

"Sire! Give us back our mother!" they sobbed.

The Emperor, much surprised, took the petition from Mme. d'Houël's hands and read it through. There were a few moments of painful silence; he raised his eyes to the little girls, asked Ducolombier a few brief questions, then suddenly starting on,

"I cannot," he said drily.

And he disappeared among the groups humbly bowing in the hall. Some one who witnessed the scene relates that the Emperor was very much moved when reading the petition. "He changed colour several times, tears were in his eyes and his voice trembled." The Duke of Rovigo asserted that pardon would be granted; the Emperor's heart had already pronounced it, but he was very angry with the minister of police, who after having made a great fuss over this affair and got all the credit, left him supreme arbiter without having given him any information concerning it.

"If the case is a worthy one," said Napoleon,

“why did he not send me word of it? and if it is not, why did he give passports to a family whom I am obliged to send away in despair?”

The poor children had indeed to return to France, knowing that they took, as it were, her death sentence to their mother. Each relay that brought them nearer to her was a step towards the scaffold; nothing could now save the poor woman, and she waited in resignation. Never, since Le Chevalier's death, had she lost the impassive manner that had astonished the spectators in court. Whether solitude had altered her ardent nature, or whether she looked on death as the only possible end to her adventurous existence, she seemed indifferent as to her fate, and thought no longer of the future. Licquet had long abandoned her; he had been “her last friend.” Of all the survivors of the affair of Quesnay she was the only one left in the *conciergerie*, the others having gone to serve their terms in Bicêtre or other fortresses.

Whilst it had seemed possible that Mme. Acquet's friends might obtain the Emperor's interest in her case, she had received great care and attention, but since the return of her daughters from Vienna things had changed. She had become once more “the woman Acquet,” and the interest that had been taken in her gave place to brutal indifference. On August 23d (and this date probably accords with the return of the children and their aunt) Chapais-Marivaux, in haste to end the affair, sent three health-officers to examine her, but these good people, knowing the consequence of their diagnosis, declared that “the symp-

toms made it impossible for them to pronounce an opinion on the state of the prisoner."

Chapais-Marivaux took a month to find doctors who would not allow pity to interfere with their professional duty, and on October 6th the prefect wrote to Réal: "M. le Procureur-Général has just had the woman Acquet examined by four surgeons, three of whom had not seen her before. They have certified that she is not pregnant, and so she is to be executed to-day."

We know nothing of the way in which she prepared for death, nor of the feeling which the news of her imminent execution must have occasioned in the prison; but when she was handed over to the executioner for the final arrangements, Mme. Acquet wrote two or three letters to beg that her children might never fall into her husband's hands. Her toilet was then made; her beautiful black hair, which she had cut off on coming to the conciergerie two years previously, fell now under the executioner's scissors; she put on a sort of jacket of white flannel, and her hands were tied behind her back. She was now ready; it was half past four in the afternoon, the doors opened, and a squad of gendarmes surrounded the cart.

The cortège went by the "Gros-Horloge" to the "Vieux-Marché." Some one who saw Mme. Acquet pass, seated in the cart beside the executioner Ferey, says that "her white dress and short black hair blowing in her face made the paleness of her skin conspicuous; she was neither downcast nor bold; the sentence was cried aloud beside the cart."

She died calmly, as she had lived for months. At five o'clock she appeared on the platform, very white and very tranquil; unresisting, she let them tie her; without fear or cry she lay on the board which swung and carried her under the knife. Her head fell without anything happening to retard the execution, and the authorities congratulated themselves on the fact in the report sent to Réal that evening: "The thing caused no greater sensation than that ordinarily produced by similar events; the rather large crowd did not give the slightest trouble."

And those who had stayed to watch the scaffold disappeared before the gendarmes escorting the men who had come to take away the body. A few followed it to the cemetery of Saint-Maur where the criminals were usually buried. The basket was emptied into a ditch that had been dug not far from a young tree to which some unknown hand had attached a black ribbon, to mark the spot which neither cross nor tombstone might adorn. The rain and wind soon destroyed this last sign; and nothing now remains to show the corner of earth in the deserted and abandoned cemetery in which still lies the body of the woman whose rank in other times would have merited the traditional epitaph: "A very high, noble and powerful lady."



## CHAPTER X

### THE CHOUANS SET FREE

A LETTER in a woman's handwriting, addressed to Timoléon de Combray, Hôtel de la Loi, Rue de Richelieu, its black seal hastily broken, contains these words: "Alas, my dear cousin, you still continued to hope when all hope was over. . . . I cannot leave your mother and I am anxious about M. de Bonnœil's condition."

This is all that we can glean of the manner in which Mme. Acquet's mother and brothers learned of her execution on October 6th. Mme. de Combray at least displayed a good deal of energy, if not great calmness. After the winter began, the letters she wrote Timoléon regained their natural tone. The great sorrow seems to have been forgotten; they all were leagued together against Acquet, who still reigned triumphant at Donnay, and threatened to absorb the fortune of the whole family. The trial had cost an enormous sum. Besides the money stolen in the woods at Quesnay, which the Marquise had to refund, she had been obliged to spend money freely in order to "corrupt Licquet," for Chauveau-Lagarde's fee, for her advocate Maître Gady de la Vigne, and for Ducolombier's journeys to Paris and Vienna with the little girls,—the whole outlay amounting to nearly

125,000 francs; and as the farms at Tournebut were tenantless, while Acquet retained all the estates in lower Normandy and would not allow them anything, the Marquise and her sons found their income reduced to almost nothing. There remained not a single crown of the 25,000 francs deposited in August, 1807, with Legrand. All had been spent on "necessaries for the prisoners, or in their interests."

Acquet was intractable. When the time for settling up came, he refused insolently to pay his share of the lawsuit or for his children's education. "Mme. de Combray, in order to carry out her own frenzied plots," he stated, "had foolishly used her daughter's money in paying her accomplices, and now she came and complained that Mme. Acquet lacked bread and that she supported her, besides paying for the children's schooling. . . . Mme. Acquet left her husband's house on the advice of her mother who wished to make an accomplice of her. They took away the children, their father did not even know the place of their retreat, and the very persons who had abducted them came and asked him for the cost of their maintenance."

This was his plea; to which the Combrays replied: "The fee of Mme. Acquet's lawyer, the expenses of the journey to Vienna and of the little girls' stay in Paris that they might beg for their mother's pardon, devolved, if not on the prisoner's husband, at least on her young children as her heirs; and in any case Acquet ought to pay the bill." But the latter, who was placed in a very strong position

by the services he had rendered Réal and by the protection of Pontécoulant, with whom he had associated himself, replied that Chauveau-Lagarde, while pretending to plead for Mme. Acquet, had in reality only defended Mme. de Combray: "All Rouen who heard the counsel's speech bears witness that the daughter was sacrificed to save the mother. . . . The real object of their solicitude had been the Marquise. Certainly they took very little interest in their sister, and the moment her eyes were closed in death, were base enough to ask for her funeral expenses in court, and hastened to denounce her children to the Minister of Public Affairs in order that they might be forced to pay for the sentence pronounced against their mother."

The case thus stated, the discussion could only become a scandal. Bonnœil disclosed the fact that his brother-in-law, on being asked by a third person what influences he could bring to bear in order to obtain Mme. Acquet's pardon, had replied that "such steps offered little chance of success, and that from the moment the unhappy woman was condemned, the best way to save her from dying on the scaffold, would be to poison her in prison." A fresh suit was begun. The correspondence which passed between the exasperated Combrays and their brother-in-law, who succeeded in maintaining his self-control, must have made all reconciliation impossible. A letter in Bonnœil's handwriting is sufficient to illustrate the style :

“Is it charitable for an old French chevalier, a defender of the Faith and of the Throne, to increase the sorrows on which his two brothers-in-law are feeding in the silence of oblivion? Does he hope in his exasperation that he will be able to force them into a repetition of the story of the crimes committed by Desrues, Cartouche, Pugatscheff, Shinderhannes, and other impostors, thieves, garroters and ruffians, who have rendered themselves famous by their murders, poisonings, cruelties and cowardly actions? They promise that, once their case is decided, they will not again trouble *Sieur Acquet de Ferolles*.”

The invectives were, to say the least, ill-timed. The Combrays had gone to law in order to force this man, whom they compared to the most celebrated assassins, to undertake the education of their sister's three children. These orphans, for whose schooling at the *Misses Dusaussay's* no one was ready to pay, were pitied by all who knew of their situation. Some pious ladies mentioned it to the Cardinal Archbishop of Rouen, who kindly offered to subscribe towards the cost of their education. The Combrays proudly refused, for which *Acquet* naturally blamed them. “They think their nieces would be dishonoured by accepting a favour,” he wrote.

*Mme. de Combray* might perhaps have yielded, if any one had made her understand that her granddaughters were the only stake she had left. In fact, since *Mme. Acquet's* death, no stone had been left unturned to obtain the old *Marquise's* pardon. *Ducolombier* even went to Navarre to entreat the help of the Empress *Joséphine*, whose credit did not

stand very high. We can understand that after the official notification of the imperial divorce, and as soon as the great event became known, the Combrays, renouncing their relationship (which was of the very slightest) with the Tascher de la Pageries, began immediately to count in advance on the clemency of the future Empress, be she who she might. When it was certain that an Archduchess was to succeed General Beauharnais's widow on the throne of France, Ducolombier set out for Vienna in the hope of outstripping the innumerable host of those who went there as petitioners. It does not appear that he got farther than Carlsruhe, and his journey was absolutely fruitless ; but it soon became known that the imperial couple intended making a triumphal progress through the north of France, ending at Havre or Rouen, and it was then decided that the little Acquets should appear again.

At three o'clock in the afternoon of May 30th, the Emperor and Empress arrived at Rouën. Ducolombier, walking in front of the three little girls, who were escorted by Mlle. Querey, tried to force a passage for them through the streets leading to the imperial residence, but could not get into the house, and was obliged to content himself with handing the petition, drawn up by Chaveau-Legarde, to the King of Westphalia. He hoped the next day to be able to place the children on the Emperor's route as he was on his way to visit some spinning mills ; but as soon as he was in the street with the orphans, he learnt that Napoleon had inspected the factories at half past three



in the morning, and that his departure was fixed for ten o'clock. Branzon, a revenue collector and friend of Licquet's procured the little Acquets a card from the prefect, by showing which they were allowed to wait at the door of the Emperor's residence. We quote the very words of the letter written the same day by Ducolombier to Bonnœil and the old Marquise :

"Mlle. Querey and the three little girls were permitted to wait at the door of the prefecture where, as you must know, they allow no one. As soon as their Majesties' carriage came out, little Caroline cried out to the Empress. The Emperor lowered the window to take the petition, and handed it to the Empress, as it was meant for her. The Empress bent forward in order to see them. . . ."

This time their confidence was unbounded. The old Marquise was already congratulated on her approaching liberation; but days passed and nothing more was heard of it. They waited patiently for a year, their hopes growing fainter each day, and when it became only too evident that the petition had had no effect, Timoléon ventured to remind the Empress of it, and drew up in his own name a fresh request for his mother's pardon, with no better result than before. A supreme and useless effort was made on the 30th of August, 1813, when Marie Louise was Empress-Queen-Regent. At this time Bonnœil had at length been let out of prison, where he had been unjustly detained since August, 1807. He had not appeared before the court, and consequently was not

condemned, but was detained as a "precautionary measure." As his health was much impaired by his stay at the *conciergerie*, the prefect took it upon himself to have him removed, and placed him at Rouen under the supervision of the police.

For there he could at least keep himself informed of what was going on. If the newspapers gave but little news, he could still collect the rumours of the town. Doubtless he was the first to advise his mother to submit to her fate; and from this very moment the Marquise displayed an astonishing serenity, as if she in fact foresaw the fall of him whom she considered her personal enemy. She had accustomed herself very quickly to life in the prison to which she had been transferred in 1813. The rules were not very strict for those inmates who had a little money to spend; she received visitors, sent to Tournebut for her backgammon-board and her book of rules, and calmly awaited the long-hoped-for thunderbolt.

It fell at length, and the old Chouan must have flushed with triumph when she heard that Bonaparte was crushed. What a sudden change! In less than a day, the prisoner became again the venerable Marquise de Combray, a victim to her devotion to the royal cause, a heroine, a martyr, a saint; while at the other end of Normandy, Acquet de Férolles, who had at last decided to take in his three children, felt the ground tremble under his feet, and hurriedly made his preparations for flight. In their eagerness to make themselves acceptable to the Combrays, people "who would not have raised a finger to help them when

they were overwhelmed with misfortune," now revealed to them things that had hitherto been hidden from them; and thus the Marquise and her sons learned how Senator Pontécoulant, out of hatred for Caffarelli, "whom he wished to ruin," had undertaken, "with the aid of Acquet de Férolles," to hand over d'Aché to assassins. Proscribed royalists emerged on all sides from the holes where they had been burrowing for the last fifteen years. There was a spirit of retaliation in the air. Every one was making up his account and writing out the bill. In this home of the Chouannerie, where hatred ran rife and there were so many bitter desires for revenge, a terrible reaction set in. The short notes, which the Marquise exchanged with her sons and servants during the last few days of her captivity, expressed neither joy at the Princes' return nor happiness at her own restoration to liberty. They might be summed up in these words: "It is our turn now," and the germ of the dark history of the Restoration and the revolutions which followed it is contained in the outpourings of this embittered heart, which nothing save vengeance could henceforth satisfy.

On Sunday, May 1st, 1814, at the hour when Louis XVIII was to enter Saint Ouen, the doors of the prison were opened for the Marquise de Combray, who slept the following night at her house in the Rue des Carmélites. The next day at 1.30 P. M. she set out for Tournebut with Mlle. Querey; her bailiff, Leclerc, came as far as Rouen to fetch her in his trap. All the public conveyances were overcrowded;

on the roads leading to Paris there was an uninterrupted stream of vehicles of all sorts, of cavaliers and of foot passengers, all hurrying to see the King's return to his capital. Bonnœil, who was at last delivered from police supervision, had to set out on foot for Tournebut; he walked the distance during the night, and arrived in the morning to find his mother already installed there and making an inspection of the despoiled old château which she had never thought to see again. The astonishing reversions of fate make one think of the success which the opera "*La Dame Blanche*" had some years later. This charming work sang their own history to these nobles who were still smarting, and recalled to them their ruined past. The abandoned "*Château d'Avenel*," the "*poor Dame Marguerite*" spinning in the deserted halls and dreaming of her masters, the mysterious being who watched over the destinies of the noble family, and the amusing revival of those last vestiges of feudal times, the bailiff, the bell in the turret, the gallant paladin, the knight's banner—all these things saddened our grandmothers by arousing the melancholy spectre of the good old times.

At the beginning of August, 1814, Guérin-Bruslart, who had become M. le Chevalier de Bruslard, Field Marshal in the King's army, attracted his Majesty's attention to the survivors of the affair of Quesnay. He took Le Chevalier's son, aged twelve years, to the Tuileries, and the King accorded him a pension and a scholarship at one of the royal colleges. The very same day Louis XVIII signed a royal pardon, which

the Court of Rouen ratified a few days later, by which Mme. de Combray's sentence was annulled. On September 5th the Marquise saw her wildest dream realised and was presented to the King—a fact which was mentioned in the *Moniteur* of the following day.

This signal favour rallied many to the Combrays. Denunciations of Acquet and his friends were heard on all sides. The letters written at this period from Bonnœil to his brother testify to the astonishment they felt at these revelations. They made a fresh discovery every day. "M. Bruslard told me the other day that La Vaubadon wished to have him arrested, but that he took care not to fall into the trap she had set for him." "With regard to Licquet, he knew d'Aché well and had made up to him before the affair with Georges, believing at that time that there would be a change of government." "It is quite certain that it was Senator Pontécoulant who had d'Aché killed; Frotté's death was partly due to him." "With regard to Acquet, M. de Rivoire told Placène that he had been seen in the temple about six years ago, and that every one there considered him a spy and an informer. . . ."

Thus, little by little Mme. de Combray arrived at the conclusion that all her misfortunes had been caused by her enemies' hatred. In 1815 a biographer published a life of the Marquise, which was preceded by a dedication to herself which she had evidently dictated, and which placed her high up in the list of royalist martyrs.

This halo pleased her immensely. She was present



at the fêtes given at the Rouen prefecture, where she walked triumphantly—still holding herself very erect and wearing lilies in her hair—through the very halls into which she had once been dragged handcuffed by Savoye-Rollin's gaolers. At dinners where she was an honoured guest she would recount, with astonishing calmness, her impressions of the pillory and the prisons. She sent a confidential agent to Donnay "to obtain news of the *Sieur Acquet*," who was not at all satisfied and by no means at ease, as we can well imagine. It was said that he had sent for his sister to come and take care of his three children, the eldest of whom was nearly twenty years of age. *Acquet* pretended to be ill in order to defer his departure from Donnay. He finally quitted Normandy early in the autumn of 1814, taking with him his three daughters, "whom he counted on marrying off in his own home." "He is without house or home," wrote *Mme. de Combray*, "and possesses nothing but the shame by which he is covered." *Acquet de Férolles* settled at *Saint-Hilaire-de-Tulmont*, where he died on April 6th, 1815.

With the Hundred Days came another sudden change. At the first rumour of Bonaparte's landing, *Mme. de Combray* set out for the coast and crossed to England. If the alarm was intense, it lasted but a short time. In July, 1815, the Marquise returned to *Tournebut*, which she busied herself with repairing. She found scope for her energy in directing the workmen, in superintending to the smallest detail the administration of her estate, and in looking after her

household with the particularity of former times. Although Louis XVIII's Jacobinism seems to have been the first thing that disillusioned the old royalist, she was none the less the Lady of Tournebut, and within the limits of her estate she could still believe that she had returned to the days before 1789. She still had her seat at church, and her name was to be found in 1819 inscribed on the bell at Aubevoye of which she was patroness.

Mme. de Combray never again quitted Tournebut, where she lived with her son Bonnœil, waited upon by Catherine Querey, who had been faithful to her in her misfortunes. Except for this faithful girl, the Marquise had made a clean sweep of all her old servants. None of them are to be found among the persons who surrounded her during the Restoration. These were a maid, Henriette Lerebour, a niece of Mlle. Querey; a cook, a coachman and a footman. During the years that followed, there was an incessant coming and going of workmen at Tournebut. In 1823 the château and its surrounding walls were still undergoing repairs. In the middle of October of the same year, Mme. de Combray, who was worn out, took to her bed. On the morning of Thursday, the 23d, it was reported that she was very ill, and two village women were engaged to nurse her. At eight o'clock in the evening the tolling of the bells announced that the Marquise was no more.

Her age was eighty-one years and nine months. When the judge called on Friday, at Bonnœil's special request, to affix seals to her effects, he asked

to be taken first into the chamber of death, where he saw the Marquise lying in her painted wooden bed, hung with chintz curtains. The funeral took place at the church of Aubevoye, the poor of the village forming an escort to the coffin which the men carried on their shoulders. After the service it was laid in a grave dug under a large dark tree at the entrance to the cemetery. The tomb, which is carefully kept, bears to this day a quite legible inscription setting forth in clumsy Latin the Marquise de Combray's extraordinary history.

The liquidation of her debts, which followed on her decease and the division of her property, brought Acquet de Férolles' daughters to Tournebut, all three of whom were well married. In making an inventory of the furniture in the château, they found amongst things forgotten in the attic the harp on which their mother had played when as a young girl she had lived at Tournebut, and a saddle which the "dragoon" may have used on her nocturnal rides towards the hill of Authevernes in pursuit of coaches.

Mme. de Combray's sons kept Tournebut, and Bonnœil continued to live there. There are many people in Aubevoye who remember him. He was a tall old man, with almost the figure of an athlete, though quite bowed and bent. His eyebrows were grizzled and bushy, his eyes large and very dark, his complexion sunburned. He was somewhat gloomy, and seemed to care for nothing but to talk with a very faded and wrinkled old woman in a tall goffered cap, who was an object of veneration to everybody. This

was Mlle. Querey. All were aware she had been Mme. de Combray's confidante and knew all the Marquise's secrets: and she was often seen talking at great length to Bonnœil about the past.

Bonnœil died at Tournebut in 1846, at the age of eighty-four, and the manor of Marillac did not long outlast him. Put up for sale in 1856, it was demolished in the following year and replaced by a large and splendid villa. While the walls of the old château were being demolished, the peasants of Aubevoye, who had so often listened to the legends concerning it, displayed great curiosity as to the mysteries which the demolition would disclose. Nothing was discovered but a partly filled up subterranean passage, which seemed to run towards the small château. The secret of the other hiding-places had long been known. A careful examination of the old dwelling produced only one surprise. A portmanteau containing 3,000 francs in crowns and double-louis was found in a dark attic. Mme. de Combray's grandchildren knew so little of the drama of their house, that no one thought of connecting this find with the affairs of Quesnay, of which they had scarcely ever heard. It seems probable that this portmanteau belonged to the lawyer Lefebre and was hidden by him, unknown to the Marquise, in the hope of being able to recover it later on.

A very few words will suffice to tell the fate of the other actors in this drama. Licquet was unfortunate; but first of all he asked for the cross of the Legion of Honour. "I have served the government for twenty

years," he wrote to Réal. "I bristle with titles. I am the father of a family and am looked up to by the authorities. My only ambition is honour, and I am bold enough to ask for a sign. Will you be kind enough to obtain it for me?" Did Réal not dare to stand sponsor for such a candidate? Did they think that the cross, given hitherto so parsimoniously to civilians, was not meant for the police? Licquet was obliged to wait in patience. In the hope of increasing his claims to the honour he coveted, he went in quest of new achievements, and had the good fortune to discover a second attack on a coach, far less picturesque, as a matter of fact, than the one to which he owed his fame, but which he undertook to work up like a master, and did it so well, by dint of disguises, forged letters, surprised confidences, the invention of imaginary persons, and other melodramatic tricks, that he succeeded in producing at the Criminal Court at Evreux seven prisoners against whom the evidence was so well concocted that five at least were in danger of losing their heads. But when the imperial Procurator arrived at the place, instead of accepting the work as completed, he carefully examined the papers referring to the inquiry. Disgusted at the means used to drag confessions from the accused, and indignant that his name should have been associated with so repulsive a comedy, he asked for explanations. Licquet attempted to brazen it out, but was scornfully told to hold his peace. Wounded to the quick, he began a campaign of recriminations, raillery and invective against the magistrates of Eure, which was



only ended by the unanimous acquittal of the seven innocent persons whom he had delivered over to justice, and whose release the Procurator himself generously demanded.

The blow fell all the heavier on Licquet as he was at the time deeply compromised in the frauds of his friend Branzon, a collector at Rouen, whose malversations had caused the ruin of Savoye-Rollin. The prefect's innocence was firmly established, but Branzon, who had already been imprisoned as a Chouan in the Temple, and whose history must have been a very varied one, was condemned to twelve years' imprisonment in chains.

This also was a blow to Licquet. Realising, during the early days of the Restoration, that the game he had played had brought him more enemies than friends, he thought it wise to leave Rouen, and like so many others lose himself among the police in Paris. Doubtless he was not idle while he was there, and if the fire of 1871 had not destroyed the archives of the prefecture, it would have been interesting to search for traces of him. We seem to recognise his methods in the strangely dubious affair of the false dauphin, Mathurin Bruneau. This obscure intrigue was connected with Rouen; his friend Branzon, who was detained at Bicêtre, was the manager of it. A certain Joseph Paulin figured in it—a strange person, who boasted of having received the son of Louis XVI at the door of the temple and, for this reason, was a partisan of two dauphins. Joseph Paulin was, in my opinion, a very cunning detective, who was, moreover,

charged with the surveillance of the believers, sincere or otherwise, in the survival of Louis XVII. In order the better to gain their confidence, he pretended to have had a hand in the young King's flight. With the exception of a few plausible allegations, the accounts he gave of his wonderful adventures do not bear investigation. What makes us think that he was Licquet's pupil, or that at least he had some connection with the police of Rouen, is that in 1817, at the time of the Bruneau intrigue, we find him marrying the woman, Delaitre, aged forty-six, and living on an allowance from the parish and a sum left him "by a person who had died at Bicêtre." The woman Delaitre seemed to be identical with the spy whom Licquet had so cleverly utilised.

Joseph Paulin died in 1842; his wife survived him twenty years, dying at last in the Rue Croix de Fer at the age of ninety-one. Up to the time of her death she received a small pension from the town. As to Licquet, he lived to one hundred—but without any decoration—in his lodging in the Rue Saint-Lé. The old man's walks in the streets which were so familiar to him, must have been rich in memories. The "Gros-Horloge" under which the tumbrils had passed; the "Vieux-Marché," where so many heads had fallen which the executioner owed to him; le Faubourg Bouvreuil, where the graves of his victims grew green; Bicêtre, the old conciergerie, the palace itself, which he could see from his windows,—all these objects must have called up to his mind painful recollections. The certificate of his death, which

bears the date February 7, 1855, simply describes him as an ex-advocate.

Querelle, whose denunciation ruined Georges Cadoudal, was set at liberty at the end of a year. Besides his life, Desmarets had promised him the sum of 80,000 francs to pay his debts with, but as they were in no hurry to hand him the money, his creditors lost patience and had him shut up in Sainte-Pelagie. Desmarets at last decided to pay up, and Querelle was sent to Piémont, where he lived on a small pension from the government. In 1814 we find those of Georges' accomplices who had escaped the scaffold—among whom were Hozier and Amand Gaillard,—scattered among the prisons of the kingdom, in the fortresses of Ham, Joux, and Bouillon. Others who had been sent under surveillance forty leagues from Paris and the seacoast, reappeared, ruined by ten years of enforced idleness, threats and annoyances. Vannier the lawyer died in prison at Brest; Bureau de Placène, who was let out of prison at the Restoration, assisted Bruslard in the distribution of the rewards granted by the King to those who had helped on the good cause. Allain, who had been condemned to death for contumacy by the decree of Rouen, gave himself up in 1815. He was immediately set free, and a pension granted him. Seeing which, Joseph Buquet, who was in the same predicament, presented himself, and being acquitted immediately, returned to Donnay, dug up the 43,000 francs remaining over from the sum stolen in 1807, and lived "rich and despised." As to the girl Dupont, who had been Mme. Acquet's

confidante, she was kept in prison till 1814. Being released on the King's return she immediately took refuge in a convent where she spent the rest of her life.

Mme. de Vaubadon, who lived disguised under the name of Tourville, which had been her mother's, died in misery in a dirty lodging-house at Belleville on January 23, 1848; her body was borne on the following day to the parish cemetery, where the old register proves that no one bought a corner of ground for her where she could rest in peace. M. de Vaubadon had died eight years previously, having pardoned her some years before.

Certain of the inhabitants of Saint-Lô still remember the tall old man, always gloomy and with a pale complexion, who seemed to have only one idea, and who, to the last day of his life, loved and defended the woman to whom he had given his name. As for Foison, the murderer, he was made a lieutenant and received the cross of the Legion of Honour. Cafarelli, to whose lot it fell to present it to him, excused himself on a plea of necessary absence. M. Lance, the Secretary-General for the prefecture, who was obliged to take his place, could not, as he bestowed the decoration, refrain "from letting him observe the disgust he felt for his person, and the shame he experienced at seeing the star of the brave thus profaned." M. Lance was dismissed at the instance of Foison, who, soon afterwards, was made an officer, and despatched to the army in Spain, whither his reputation had preceded him. Tradition assures us that

an avenger had reserved for him a death similar to d'Aché's, and that he was found on the road one morning pierced with bullets. Nothing is farther from the truth. Foison became a captain and lived till 1843.

D'Aché's family, which returned to Gournay after Georges Cadoudal's execution, was disturbed afresh at Mme. de Combray's arrest. As we have said before, Licquet had had Jean Baptiste de Caqueray (who had married Louise d'Aché in 1806) brought handcuffed into Rouen, but had scarcely examined him. "Caqueray," he wrote, "is quite innocent; he quarrelled with his father-in-law;" and he dismissed him with this remark: "If only he had known the prey he was allowing to escape!" Up to 1814 Caqueray did not again attract the attention of the police. At the Restoration he was made a captain of gendarmes. His wife Louise d'Aché was in 1815 appointed lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Bourbon, by whom she had in part been brought up, being on her mother's side the niece of the gentle Vicomte de Roquefeuille, who had previously "consoled the Duchess so tenderly for the desertion of her inconstant husband." Louise d'Aché died in 1817, and her sister Alexandrine, who was unmarried, was in her turn summoned to the Princess, and took the title of Comtesse d'Aché. In spite of the Princes' favour, Caqueray remained a captain of gendarmes till he left the service in 1830. It was only then made known that in 1804, at the time of Querelle's disclosures and of the journey undertaken by Savary



to Biville, to surprise a fourth landing of conspirators, it was he, Jean-Baptiste de Caqueray, who, warned by a messenger from Georges that "all were compromised," started from Gournay on horseback, reached the farm of La Poterie in twelve hours, crossed three lines of gendarmes, and signalled to the English brig which was tacking along the coast, to stand out to sea. Caqueray immediately remounted his horse, endured the fire of an ambuscade, flung himself into the forest of Eu, and succeeded in reaching Gournay before his absence had been noticed, and just in time to receive a visit from Captain Manginot, who, as we have already related, sent him to the Temple with Mme. d'Aché and Louise.

Caqueray died in 1834, leaving several children quite unprovided for. They were, however, adopted by their grandmother, d'Aché's widow, who survived her daughters and son-in-law. She was small and had never been pretty, but had very distinguished and imposing manners. She is said to have made the following answer to a great judge who, at the time of her arrest, asked her where her husband was: "You doubtless do not know, Monsieur, whom you are addressing." From that time they ceased questioning her. She lived on till 1836. She was never heard to complain, though she and her family had lived in great poverty and known constant anxiety. She had lost her money, and her husband had died at the hand of a treacherous assassin. All her children had gone before her, and in spite of all her misfortunes, and old though she was, she still strove to bring up her

grandchildren "to love their lawful King," for whose sake she had now nothing left to sacrifice.

Perhaps in the course of that tragic night when the defeated Napoleon found himself alone in deserted Fontainebleau, the great Emperor's mind may have reverted jealously to those stubborn royalists whom neither their Princes' apathy nor the certainty of never being rewarded could daunt. At that very moment the generals whom he had loaded with titles and wealth were hastening to meet the Bourbons. He had not one friend left among the hundred million people he had governed in the day of his power. His mameluke had quitted him, his valet had fled. And if he thought of Georges guillotined in the Place de la Grève, of Le Chevalier who fell at the wall at Grenelle, of d'Aché stabbed on the road, he must also have thought of the speech ascribed to Cromwell: "Who would do the like for me?"

And perhaps of all his pangs this was the cruellest and most vengeful. His cause must, in its turn, be sanctified by misfortune to gain its fanatics and its martyrs.









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